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"Boys," he said, "in just one minute, through that door will come our new star salesman . . . and I expect every man to cooperate with him to the fullest."

No kiddin', a pin dropping would have sounded like an exploding bombshell. Jim Smith looked at me, I stared at Ed Johnson. What was going on? Who was this newcomer? What kind of a bird would he be? Who was going to be "fired"? J. P. sure had us in a dither—and I mean dither!

And then, through the door staggered the office boy carrying a tray as big as a cart wheel. On top of it stood twelve big, gleaming bottles of Listerine Antiseptic.

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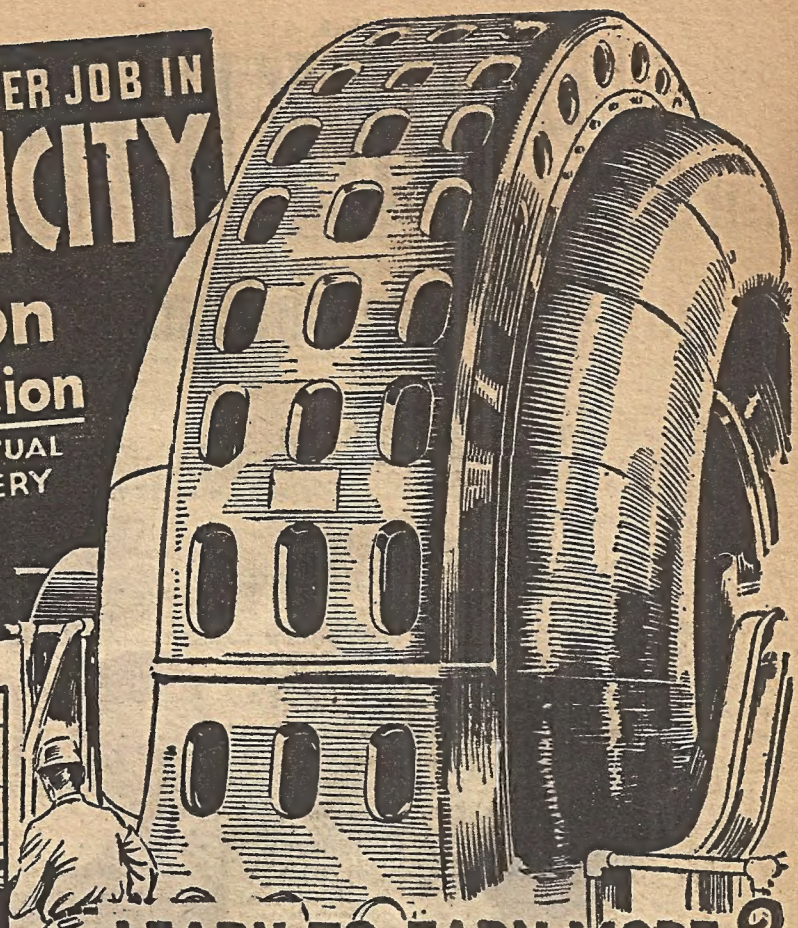

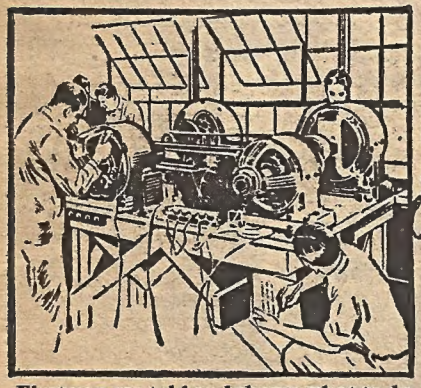

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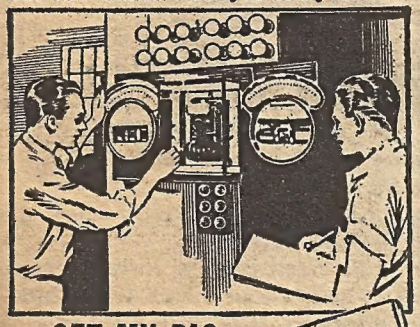

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NOVEL

THE WHEELS OF IF . . . . . **L. Sprague de Camp** . . **9**

When they worked a hex on Allister Park in a dirty political deal—they were monkeying with the wrong man! When it came to political deals—!

NOVELETTE

FRUIT OF KNOWLEDGE . . . . **C. L. Moore** **73**

The oldest human story in the world—told by one of fantasy's most popular women writers. A tale of The Garden—

SHORT STORIES

THE HATERS . . . . . **Donald A. Wollheim** . . **70**

When employing a bunch of professional African death-haters—make sure all angles are covered!

THE DEVIL'S RESCUE . . . . . **L. Ron Hubbard** . . . **99**

A man was rescued—if landing on the haunted decks of the *Flying Dutchman* was rescue!

WARM, DARK PLACES . . . . **H. L. Gold** **114**

A small curse, a sort of vest-pocket curse—but remarkably unpleasant!

POEM

PROWLER . . . . . **Frances Hall** **128**

SERIAL

THE TOMMYKNOCKER . . . . **Thomas Calvert McClary** **129**

A wonderful wish indeed—a hundred-dollar bill every day of the week, to be spent purely and solely on luxuries! But was it a boon or a curse?

READERS' DEPARTMENTS

OF THINGS BEYOND **5**

Editorial Prophecy and Future Issues.

—AND HAVING WRIT— **155**

The Readers speak their minds.

Illustrations by: Cartier, Gilmore, Kramer and Schneeman

All stories in this magazine are fiction. No actual persons are designated either by name or character. Any similarity is coincidental.

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OF THINGS BEYOND

I DO not believe in ghosts—yet. The effect editing and working on Unknown has had on an "if you can't measure it it ain't so" physicist such as myself is disconcerting. A year ago I didn't believe in prophecy or witch doctors' magic. I am still most firmly convinced of the complete asininity of 99.9 percent of would-be prophets and that approximately the same percentage of the manipulations of witch doctors falls into the same category. The situation with respect to my belief in ghosts is somewhat different; I haven't seen anything yet that gives me reason to accept it as proof of the existence of the phenomena known as "ghosts." I am getting an uncomfortable feeling, however, that some one of these days somebody is going to convince me.

The old remark that a wise man is one who knows not, and knows that he knows not, while a fool is one who knows not, and knows not that he knows not reminds me of one thing. Fools seldom seem particularly unhappy; their world—very strictly limited and highly incomplete—is, withal, a very reliable world. It's one a man can handle; it doesn't change and shift into unstable, bewildering new patterns from day to day. It is full of eternal truths, and the fool knows them all—to the best of his knowledge, which, naturally, is all that can ever affect his mental happiness.

There is, to the above-defined fool, an air of peace and stability, a security that everybody else is seeking frantically to find. The "wise" man seeks it in more knowledge—for he fears, as all men must, the unguessed things and facts that may still be lurking in that unexplored and unknowable region represented by that "knows he knows not."

Somehow, it would seem that a self-defined "wise" man made up that definition. The "fool" has what the "wise" man is seeking to gain in his frantic search for knowledge; a knowledge of everything that's worth knowing—in his opinion.

In the meanwhile, if you insist on being a "wise" man, you might be interested in a pair of items of some interest in juxtaposition. Remember "Time Travel Happens!" by A. M. Phillips in the December Unknown? The report of the adventure of two maiden lady schoolteachers who dropped back in time, when visiting in Paris, to a period more than a hundred years before their actual date of visit? Those two, being of scholarly and researching mind, were able to prove their near-incredible visit to the past.

If it happens one way—how about the other? How about someone

slipping from the past to the future? It is known—and don't condemn till you've read a fair analysis of the old man's works—that Nostradamus, the famous French prophet, did not guess at what might happen; he recorded what did happen—before it happened. His accuracy of prophecy runs considerably better, actually, than the United States government crop forecasts, in percentage, and the latter are certainly used as a basis for business.

(Incidentally, to avoid disappointment, Nostradamus did not go into much detail about this period. He was writing several hundred years ago, for people of that time—and principally for Parisians. He predicted in some detail the French Revolution, predicted several destructions of Paris—which have come off on schedule, to date—and did *not* predict destruction of Paris for 1940. He did, however, for 1999—by a "rain of fire from the East." Presumably he didn't have any adequate terms for airplane bombs, so that may mean thermite incendiaries. But the present period, too many centuries from his own times, would be of minor interest to him, and details are sketchy. The prophecy goes up to about the thirty-fifth century.)

America has its own prophet, less well known, and among his works is an item—written for an audience of about 1840—describing automobiles and concrete roads. It being difficult to describe an automobile to an audience that has never heard such terms as carburetor, differential, and even internal-combustion engine, he labored under handicaps. But he made out well enough to make it pretty evident that he had seen, somewhere, some time, a 1920 automobile, and had it described to him. The machine he described was too advanced for a 1910 model, and he left out some rather conspicuous features of the 1930 models. And may it be noted, there are a great many little features of the automobile that are *not* logical—they're results of historical development, the brain-wave of some old boy in the early days. One, for instance, being the cockeyed idea of putting the engine at the front, and then driving through the rear wheels. That involves a long, power-wasting drive shaft. So it seems unlikely that so super an engineer as a man capable of predicting, on mere engineering knowledge, what a 1920 car would be, would predict such a hodgepodge car.

It seems much more likely—since we have evidence of one couple who fell back through one hundred years of time—that occasionally a man—vanishes. (There's plenty of evidence for such things—men in full view of others, walking out into thin air.) And somehow, he falls into another time. Sometimes future—sometimes past. And sometimes he comes back, sometimes he doesn't. If he does come back, there'd be a tendency, and a smart one, to shut up; it's mighty hard to prove.

Of course, if he's a scholarly gentleman, he might spend his unintentional sojourn in the future reading histories of his beloved native land.

Then, of course, he ought to be pretty accurate at predicting revolutions and destruction of cities. Even be able to name inconsequential details, as Nostradamus did.

But I'd love to know where the man who described that 1920 car to a curiously surprised and blankly nonunderstanding stranger is to day. After all, he's probably only a middle-aged man now—and probably had and has no idea he was talking, face to face, with a man out of a history book.

THE EDITOR.

I Jumped My Pay from $18 to $50 a Week!

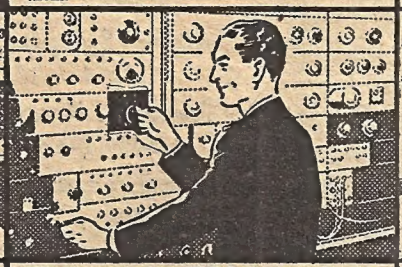
Here's how I did it

by S. J. E.
(NAME AND ADDRESS SENT UPON REQUEST)

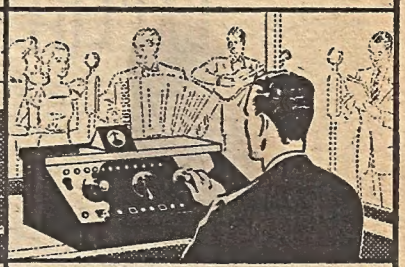
"I had an $18 a week job in a shoe factory. I'd probably be at it today if I hadn't read about the opportunities in Radio and started training at home for them."

"The training National Radio Institute gave me was so practical I was soon ready to make $5 to $10 a week in spare time servicing Radio sets."

"When I finished training I accepted a job as serviceman with a Radio store. In three weeks I was made service manager at more than twice what I earned in the shoe factory."



"Eight months later N.R.I. Graduate Service Department sent me to Station KWCR as a Radio operator. Now I am Radio Engineer at Station WSUI. I am also connected with Television Station W9XK."



"N. R. I. Training took me out of a low-pay shoe factory job and put me into Radio at good pay. Radio is growing fast."

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The day you enroll, I start sending you Extra Money Job Sheets which start showing you how to do Radio repair jobs. Throughout your Course I send plans and directions which have helped many make $5 to $10 a week extra in spare time while learning. I send special Radio equipment to conduct experiments and build circuits. This 50-50 training method makes learning at home interesting, fascinating, practical. I ALSO GIVE YOU A MODERN, PROFESSIONAL ALL-WAVE, ALL PURPOSE SET SERVICING INSTRUMENT to help you make money fixing Radios while learning and equip you for full time work after you graduate.

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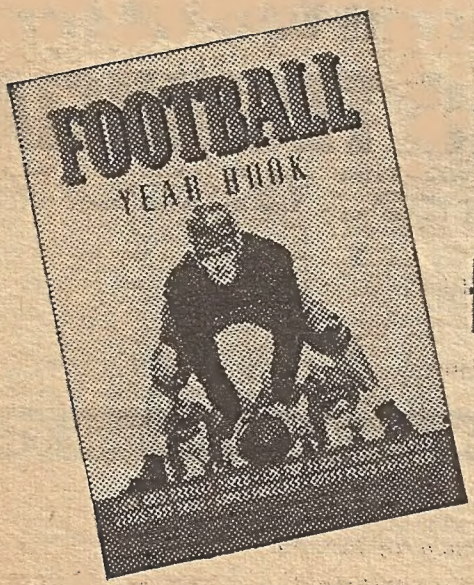

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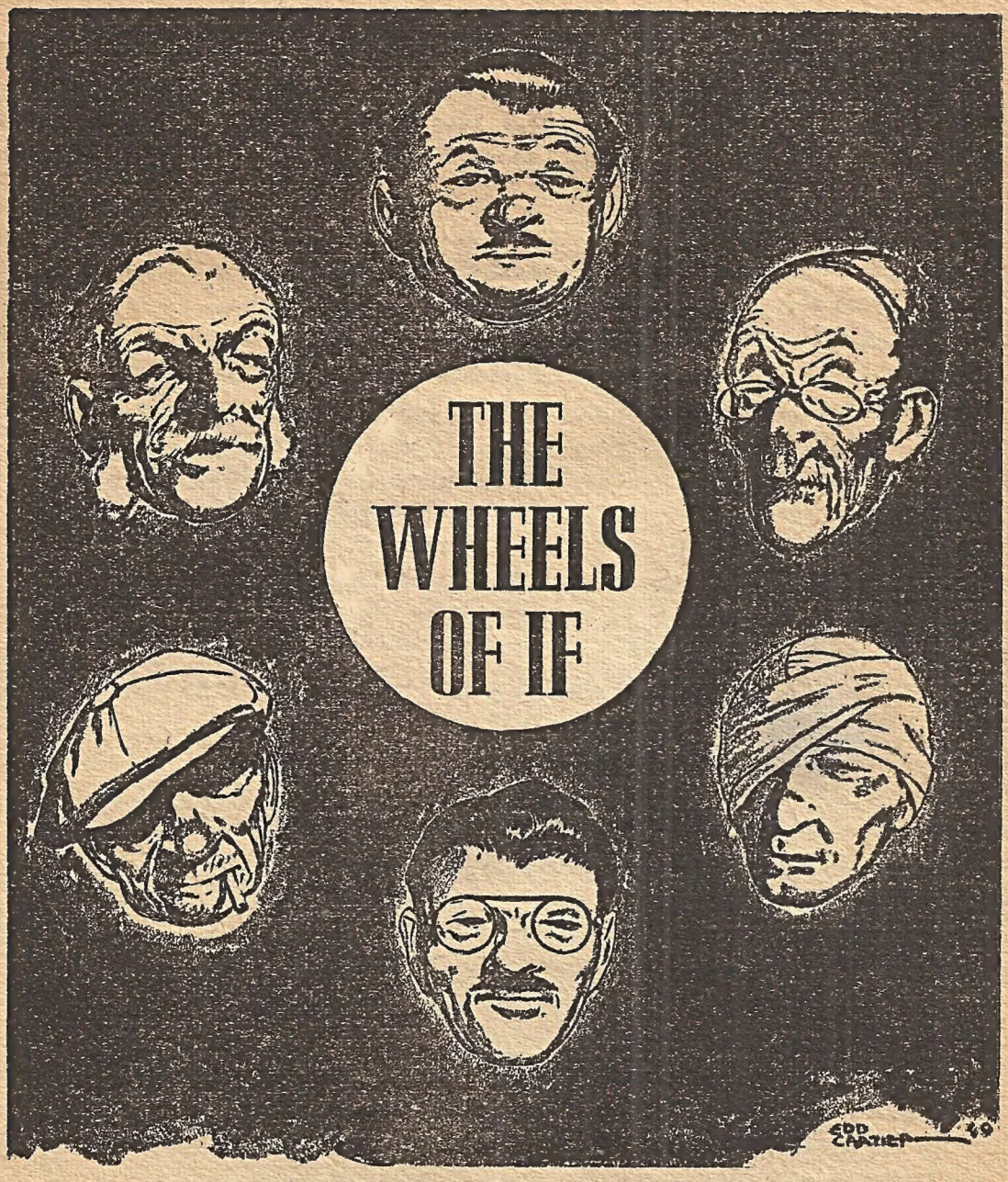


by L. SPRAGUE de CAMP

● If history was slightly different—there'd be a different world! And if for every difference there were another world—

I.

King Oswiu of Northumbria squirmed in his chair. In the first place, these synods bored him. In the second, his mathematics comprised the ability to add and subtract numbers under twenty on his fingers. So all this argument among the learned clerics, assembled in Whitby in the year of Our Lord

664, about the date of Easter and the phases of the Moon and cycles of 84 and 532 years, went over the king's head completely.

Why couldn't the Latins celebrate their Easter when they wanted and the Ionans celebrate theirs? The Ionans had been doing all right, as far as Oswiu could see. And then this Wilfrid of York had to bring in his swarms of Latin priests, objecting to this and that as schismatic, heretical, et cetera. They were abetted by Oswiu's queen, Eanfled, which put poor Oswiu in an awkward position. He wanted peace in the family, and he hoped to get to Heaven some day. But he liked the grave Irishman, Colman, leader of the Ionans. And he certainly didn't want any far-off Bishop of Rome sticking his nose into HIS affairs. On the other hand—

King Oswiu came to with a jerk. Father Wilfrid was speaking to him directly: "—the arguments of my learned friend"—he indicated the Abbot Colman of Lindisfarne—"are very ingenious, I admit. But that is not the fundamental question. The real decision is, shall we accept the authority of His Holiness of Rome like good Christians, or—"

"Wait a minute, wait a minute," interrupted Oswiu. "Why must we accept Gregory's authority to be good Christians. I'M a good Christian, and I don't let any foreign—"

"The question, my lord, is whether one CAN be a good Christian and a rebel against—"

"I am, too, a good Christian!" bristled Oswiu.

Wilfrid of York smiled thinly. "Perhaps you remember the statement of our Savior to Peter, the first Bishop of Rome? 'Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven.' You see?"

Oswiu thought. That put a different light on the matter. If this fellow Peter actually had the keys of Heaven—

He turned to the Abbot Colman and asked: "Is that a correct quotation?"

"It is, my lord. But—"

"Just a minute, just a minute. You'll get me all confused again if you start arguing. Now, can you quote a text showing that equivalent powers were granted to your Irish saint, Columba?"

Colman's face registered sudden dismay. He frowned in concentration so intense that one could almost hear the wheels.

"Well?" said Oswiu. "Speak up!"

Colman sighed. "No, my lord, I cannot. But I can show that it is the Latins, not us, who are departing from—"

"That's enough, Colman!" Oswiu's single-track mind, once made up, had no intention of being disturbed again. "I have decided that from this day forth the kingdom of Northumbria shall follow the Latin practice concerning Easter. And that we shall declare our allegiance to the Roman

bishop, Gregory, lest, when I come to the gates of Heaven, there would be none to open them for me—he being my adversary who has the keys. The synod is adjourned."

King Oswiu went out, avoiding the reproachful look that the abbot sent after him. It was a dirty trick on Colman, who was a decent chap. But it wouldn't do to antagonize the heavenly doorman. And maybe Eanfled would stop nagging now.

ALLISTER PARK rubbed his eyes and sat up in bed, as he usually did. He noticed nothing wrong until he looked at the sleeve of his pajamas.

He could not recall ever having had pajamas of that singularly repulsive green. He couldn't recall having changed to clean pajamas the night before. In short, he couldn't account for these pajamas at all.

Oh, well, probably Eunice or Mary had given them to him, and he'd put them on without thinking. He yawned, brushing his mouth with the back of his hand.

He jerked his hand away. Then he cautiously felt his upper lip.

He got out of bed and made for the nearest mirror. There was no doubt about it. He had a mustache. He had not had a mustache when he went to bed the night before.

'Abd-ar-Rahman, Governor of Cordoba for the Khalifah Hisham ibn 'Abd-al-Malik, Lord of Damascus, Protector of the Faithful, et cetera, et cetera, paced his tent like a caged leopard with claustrophobia. He hated inactivity, and to him the last six days of tentative skirmishing had been just that.

He glowered over his pepper-and-salt beard at his chiefs, sitting cross-legged in an ellipse on the rugs. "Well?" he barked.

Yezid spoke up. "But a little longer, commander in chief, and the Franks will melt away. God is good. The infidels have little cavalry, save Gothic and Aquitanian refugees. Without cavalry they cannot keep themselves fed. Our horses can range the country, supplying us and cutting off help from our enemies. There is no God but God."

Ya'qub snorted. "How long do you think our men will abide this fearful Frankish climate? The winter is almost upon us. I say strike now, while their spirits are still up. This rabble of Frankish farmers on foot will show some rare running. Have the armies of the faithful come this far by sitting in front of their enemies and making faces at them?"

Yezid delivered an impressive snort of his own. "Just the advice one would expect from a dog of a Ma'ddite. This Karel, who commands the infidels, is no fool—"

"Who's a dog?" yelped Ya'qub, jumping up. "Pig of a Yemenite—"

'Abd-ar-Rahman yelled at them until they subsided. One major idea of this foray into Gaul was to bury the animosity between members of the two parties. Yezid's starting a quarrel on political grounds put the governor

in an embarrassing position, as he was a Yemenite himself. He was still undecided. An intelligent man, he could see the sense to Yezid's Fabian advice. But emotionally he burned to get to grips with the army of Charles, Major Domus of Austrasia. And Yezid should be punished for his insulting remark.

"I have decided," said 'Abd-ar-Rahman, "that while there is much to be said on both sides, Ya'qub's advice is the sounder. Nothing hurts an army's spirit like waiting. Besides, God has planned the outcome of the battle, anyway. So why should we fear? If He decides that we shall win, we shall win.

"So tomorrow, Saturday, we will strike the Franks with all our force. God is God, and Muhammad is His prophet—"

But the next night 'Abd-ar-Rahman lay dead by the banks of the River Vienne, near Tours, with his handsome face waxy in the moonlight and blood in his pepper-and-salt beard. The Austrasian line had held. Yezid, who had been right, was dead likewise; so was Ya'qub, who had been wrong. And the surviving Arabs were fleeing back to Narbonne and Barcelona—

ALLISTER PARK opened the door of his apartment and grabbed up his *Times*. Sure enough, the date was Monday, April 11th, just as it ought to have been. The year was right, too. That ruled out the possibility of amnesia.

He went back to the mirror. He was still a slightly stout man in his middle thirties, with pale-blue eyes and thinning sandy hair. But he wasn't the same man. The nose was different. So were the eyebrows. The scar under the chin was gone.

He gave up his self-inspection and got out his clothes. He got another shock. The clothes weren't his. Or, rather, they were clothes for a man of his size, and of the quality that a self-indulgent bachelor with a salary of $7,500 a year would buy. Park didn't object to the clothes. It was just that they weren't *his* clothes.

Park gave up speculations about his sanity for the nonce; he had to get dressed. Breakfast? He was sick of the more cardboardlike cereals. To hell with it; he'd make himself some French toast. If it put another inch on his middle, he'd sweat it off Sunday at the New York A. C.

The mail was thrust under his door. He finished knotting his necktie and picked it up. The letters were all addressed to a Mr. Arthur Vogel.

Then Allister Park, really awake, did look around. The apartment was built on the same plan as his own, but it wasn't the same. The furniture was different. Lots of little things were different, such as the nick in the wall that shouldn't be there.

Park sat down and smoked a cigarette while he thought. There was no evidence of kidnaping, which, considering his business, was not too unlikely a possibility. He'd gone to bed Sunday night sober, alone, and reasonably early. Why should he wake up in another man's apartment? He forgot

for the moment that he had also awakened with another man's face. Before he had time to remember it, the sight of the clock jostled him into action. No time for French toast—it would have to be semi-edible cardboard, after all.

But the real shock awaited him when he looked for his brief case. There was none. Neither was there any sign of the sheaf of notes he had so carefully drawn up on the conduct of the forthcoming Antonini case. That was more than important. On his convicting the Antonini gang depended his nomination for district attorney for the County of New York next fall. The present D. A. was due to get the bipartisan nomination to the court of general sessions at the same time.

He dialed CAnal 6-5700. Somebody said: "Department of hospitals."

"Huh? Isn't this CAnal 6-5700?"

"Yes, this is the department of hospitals."

"Well, what's the district attorney's office, then?" Hell, he thought, I ought to know my own office phone.

"The district attorney's office is Worth 2-2200."

Park groggily called Worth 2-2200. "Mr. Park's office, please."

"What office did you ask for, please?"

"The office of Assistant District Attorney Park!" Park's voice took on a metallic rasp. "Racket bureau to you, sister."

"I am sorry, we have no such person."

"Listen, young lady, have you got a deputy assistant D. A. named Frenczko? John Frenczko? You spell it with a z."

Silence. "No, I am sorry we have no such person."

Allister Park hung up.

THE old building at 137 Centre was still there. The racket bureau was still there. But they had never heard of Allister Park. They already had an assistant D. A. of their own, a man named Hutchison, with whom they seemed quite satisfied. There was no sign of Park's two deputies, Frenczko and Burt.

As a last hope, Park went over to the Criminal Courts Building. If he wasn't utterly mad, the case of People v. Cassidy, extortion, ought to come up as soon after ten as it would take Judge Segal to read his calendar. Frenczko and Burt would be in there, after Cassidy's hide.

But there was no Judge Segal, no Frenczko, no Burt, no Cassidy—

II.

"VERY interesting, Mr. Park," soothed the psychiatrist. "Very interesting, indeed. The most hopeful feature is that you realize your difficulty and come to me now—"

"What I want to know," interrupted Park, "is: Was I sane up to yesterday and crazy since then, or was I crazy up to then and sane now?"

"It seems hard to believe that one could suffer from a coherent set of illusions for thirty-six years," replied the psychiatrist. "Yet your present account of your perceptions seems rational enough. Perhaps your memory of what you saw and experienced today is at fault."

"But I want to get straightened out! My whole political future depends on it! At least—" He stopped. *Was* there such an Antonini gang? *Was* there a nomination awaiting an Allister Park if they were convicted?

"I know," said the psychiatrist gently. "But this case isn't like any I ever heard of. You go ahead and wire Denver for Allister Park's birth certificate. We'll see if there is such a person. Then come back tomorrow—"

PARK awoke, looked around and groaned. The room had changed again. But he choked off his groan. He was occupying a twin bed. In its mate lay a fair-to-middling handsome woman of about his own age.

His groan had roused her. She asked: "How are you feeling, Walter?"

"I'm feeling fine," he mumbled. The significance of his position was soaking in. He had some trouble suppressing another groan. As he had had occasion to tell many young women, by way of fair warning, he was not a marrying man.

"I hope you are," said the woman anxiously. "You acted so queerly yesterday. Do you remember your appointment with Dr. Kerr?"

"I certainly do," said Park. Kerr was not the name of the psychiatrist with whom he had made the appointment.

The woman prepared to dress. Park gulped a little. For years he'd managed to get along without being mixed up with other men's wives, ever since—

And he wished he knew her name. A well-mannered man, under those circumstances, wouldn't refer to the woman as "Hey, you."

"What are we having for breakfast, sweetie pie?" he asked with a sickly grin.

She told him, adding: "You never called me that before, dear." When she started toward him with an expectant smile he jumped out of bed and dressed with frantic haste.

He ate silently. When the woman inquired why, he pointed to his mouth and mumbled: "Canker sore. It hurts to talk."

He fled as soon as he decently could, without learning his "wife's" name. His wallet told him his name was Walter Heineman, but little else about himself. If he wanted to badly enough, he could no doubt find out whom he worked for, who his friends were, which if any bank he had money in, et cetera. But if these daily changes were going to continue, it hardly seemed worth while. The first thing was to get back to that psychiatrist.

The numbers of the street were different. But the general layout was the same. Half an hour's walking brought him to the block where the psychiatrist's office had been. The building had been on the southeast corner

of Eighth and Fifty-seventh. Park could have sworn the building that now occupied that site was different.

But he went up anyway. He had made a note of the office number. His notebook had been missing that morning, like all the rest of his—or, rather, Arthur Vogel's—things. But he remembered the number.

The number turned out to be that of a suite of offices occupied by Williamson, Ostendorff, Cohen, Burke & Williamson, attorneys. No, they had never heard of Park's brain man. Yes, Williamson, Ostendorff, Cohen, Burke & Williamson had occupied those offices for years.

Park came out into the street and stood a long time, thinking. A phenomenon that he had hitherto noticed only vaguely now puzzled him: the extraordinary number of Union Jacks in sight.

He asked the traffic cop about it. The cop looked at him. "King's boithday," he said.

"What king?"

"Why, *ah* king, of course. David the Foist." The cop touched his finger to the peak of his cap.

PARK SETTLED himself on a park bench with a newspaper. The paper was full of things like references to the recent Anglo-Russian War, the launching of the *Queen Victoria,* his majesty's visit to a soap factory "where he displayed a keen interest in the technical problems involved in—"; the victory of Massachusetts over Quebec in the Inter-Colonial football matches—Massachusetts a colony? And football in April?—the trial of one Diedrichs for murdering a man with a crosscut saw—

All this was very interesting, especially the Diedrichs case. But Allister Park was more concerned with the whereabouts and probable fate of the Antonini gang. He also thought with gentle melancholy of Mary and Eunice and Dorothy and Martha and Joan and— But that was not as important as the beautiful case he had dug up against such a slimy set of public enemies. Even Park, despite the cynical view of humanity that public prosecutors get, had felt a righteous glow when he tallied up the evidence and knew he had them.

And the nomination was not to be sneezed at, either. It just happened that he was available when it was a Protestant's turn at that nomination. If he missed out, he'd have to wait while a Catholic and a Jew took theirs. Since you had to be one or the other to get nominated at all, Park had become perforce a church member and a regular goer. His hope was, after a few terms as D. A., to follow the incumbent D. A. onto the bench. He looked in his pockets. There was enough there for one good bender.

Of the rest of the day he never could remember much afterward. He did remember giving a ten-dollar bill to an old woman selling shoelaces, leading a group of drunks in a song about one Columbo who knew the world was round-o—unexpurgated—and trying to take a fireman's hose away from him on the ground that the city was having a water shortage.

The next time Park woke up, he was tied very securely to a large bed, with a small man watching him—

PARK AWOKE in another strange room, without a trace of a hangover. A quick look around assured him that he was alone.

It was time, he thought, that he worked out a system for the investigation of his identity on each successive morning. He learned that his name

was Wadsworth Noe. The pants of all the suits in his closet were baggy knee pants, plus fours.

Something was going *ping, ping, ping,* like one of those tactful alarm clocks. Allister Park located the source of the noise in a goose-necked gadget on the table, which he finally identified as a telephone. The transmitter and receiver were built into a single unit at the end of the gooseneck, so there was nothing to lift off the hook. He pressed a button in the base.

A voice spoke: "Waddy?"

"Oh . . . yeah. Who's this?"

"This is your little bunnykins."

Park swore under his breath. The voice sounded female and young, and had a slight indefinable accent. He stalled: "How are you this morning?"

"Oh, I'm fine. How's my little butterball?"

Park winced. Wadsworth Noe had a figure even more portly than Allister Park's. Park, with effort, put sirup into his voice: "Oh, I'm fine, too, sweetie pie. Only I'm lonesome as all hell."

"Oh, isn't that too bad! Oo poor little thing! Shall I come up and cook dinner for my precious?"

"I'd love it." A plan was forming in Park's mind. Hitherto all these changes had taken place while he was asleep. If he could get somebody to sit around and watch him while he stayed up—

The date was made. Park found he'd have to market.

On the street, aside from the fact that all the men wore plus fours and wide-brimmed hats, the first thing that struck him was the sight of two dark men in uniform. They walked in step down the middle of the sidewalk. Their walk implied that they expected people to get out of their way. People got. As the soldiers passed him, Park caught a sentence in a foreign language. It sounded like Spanish.

At the market, everyone spoke with that accent Park had heard over the phone. They fell silent when another pair of soldiers entered. These loudly demanded certain articles of food. A clerk scurried around and got the order. The soldiers took the things and departed without paying.

Park thought of going to a library to learn about the world he was in. But if he were going to shift again, it would hardly be worth while. He bought a New York *Record,* noticing that the stand also carried a lot of papers in French and Spanish.

Back in his apartment he read of His Majesty Napoleon V, apparently emperor of New York City and God knew what else!

HIS LITTLE bunnykins turned out to be a smallish dark girl, not bad-looking, who kissed him soundly.

She said: "Where have you been the last few days, Waddy? I haven't heard from you for simply *ages!* I was beginning to think you'd forgotten me. Oo hasn't forgotten, has oo?"

"Me forget? Why, sweetie pie, I couldn't any more forget you than I could forget my own name." And what the hell's that?—he asked himself. Wordsworth—no, Wadsworth Noe. Thank God! "Give us another kiss."

She looked at him. "What makes you talk so funny, Waddy?"

"Canker sore," said Allister Park.

"O-o-o, you poor angel. Let me see it."

"It's all right. How about that famous dinner?"

At least Wadsworth Noe kept a good cellar. After dinner, Park applied himself cautiously to this. It gave an excuse for just sitting. Park asked the girl about herself. She chattered on happily for some hours.

Then her conversation began to run dry. There were long silences.

She looked at him quizzically. "Are you worrying about something, Waddy? Somehow you seem like a different man."

"No," he said. "I'm not worrying."

She looked at the clock. "I suppose I ought to go," she said hesitantly.

Park sat up. "Oh, please don't!"

She relaxed and smiled. "I didn't *think* you'd let me. Just wait." She disappeared into the bedroom and presently emerged in a filmy nightgown.

Allister Park was not surprised. But he was concerned. Attractive as the girl was, the thought of solving his predicament was more so. Besides, he was already sleepy from the liqueurs he had drunk.

"How about making some coffee, sweetie pie?" he asked.

She acquiesced. The making and drinking of the coffee took another hour. It was close to midnight. To keep the ball rolling, Park told some stories. Then the conversation died down again. The girl yawned. She seemed puzzled and a bit resentful.

She asked: "Are you going to sit up all night?"

That was just what Park intended to do. But while he cast about for a plausible reason to give, he stalled: "Ever tell you about that man Wugson I met last week? Funniest chap you ever saw. He has a big bunch of hairs growing out the end of his nose—"

He went on in detail about the oddities of the imaginary Mr. Wugson. The girl had an expression of what-did-I-do-to-deserve-this. She yawned again.

Click! Allister Park rubbed his eyes and sat up. He was on a hard, knobby thing that might, by gross misuse of the language, be called a mattress. His eyes focused on a row of iron bars.

He was in jail.

Allister Park's day in jail proved neither interesting nor informative. He was marched out for meals and for an hour of exercise. Nobody spoke to him except a guard, who asked: "Hey, there, chief, who ya think you are today, huh? Julius Cæsar?"

Park grinned. "Nope. I'm God this time."

This was getting to be a bore. If one could do this flitting about from existence to existence voluntarily, it might be fun. As it was, one didn't stay put long enough to adjust oneself to any of these worlds of—illusion?

The next day he was a shabby fellow sleeping on a park bench. The city was still New York—no, it wasn't; it was a different city built on the site of New York.

He had money for nothing more than a bottle of milk and a loaf of bread. These he bought and consumed slowly, while reading somebody's discarded newspaper. Reading was difficult because of the queer spelling. And the people had an accent that required the closest attention to understand.

He spent a couple of hours in an art museum. The guards looked at him as if he were something missed by the cleaners. When it closed he went back to his park bench and waited. Night came.

A car—at least, a four-wheeled power vehicle—drew up and a couple of cops got out. Park guessed they were cops because of their rhinestone epaulets. One asked: "Are you John Gilby?" He pronounced it: "Air yew Yawn Gilbü?"

But Allister Park caught his drift. "Damned if I know, brother. Am I?"

The cops looked at each other. "He's him, all right," said one. To Park: "Come along."

Park learned that he was not wanted for anything more serious than disappearance. He kept his own counsel until they arrived at the station house.

Inside was a fat woman. She jumped up and pointed at him, crying raucously: "That's him! That's the dirty deserter, running off and leaving his poor wife to starve! The back of me hand to you, you dirty—"

"Please, Mrs. Gilby!" said the desk sergeant.

The woman was not to be silenced. "Heaven curse the day I met you! Sergeant, darlin', what can I do to put the dirty loafer in jail where he belongs?"

"Well," said the sergeant uncomfortably, "you can charge him with desertion, of course. But don't you think you'd better go home and talk it over? We don't want to—"

"Hey!" cried Park. They looked at him. "I'll take jail, if you don't mind—"

Click! Once again he was in bed. It was a real bed this time. He looked around. The place had the unmistakable air of a sanitarium or hospital.

Oh, well. Park rolled over and went to sleep.

Next morning he was in the same place. He began to have hopes. Then he remembered that, as the transitions happened at midnight, he had no reason for assuming that the next one would not happen the following midnight.

He spent a very boring day. A physician came in, asked him how he was, and was gone almost before Park could say "Fine." People brought

him his meals. If he'd been sure he was going to linger, he'd have made vigorous efforts to orient himself and to get out. But as it was, there didn't seem any point.

The next morning he was still in bed. But when he tried to rub his eyes and sit up he found that his wrists and ankles were firmly tied to the four posts. This wasn't the same bed nor the same room. This looked like a room in somebody's private house.

And at the foot of the bed sat the somebody; a small, gray-haired man with black eyes that gleamed over a sharp nose.

For a few seconds Allister Park and the man looked at each other. The man's expression underwent a sudden and alarming change, as if a visceral pain had gripped him. He stared at his own clothes as if he had never seen them before. He screamed, jumped up and dashed out of the room. Park heard his feet clattering downstairs, and the slam of a front door. Then he heard nothing.

III.

Allister Park tried pulling at his bonds. But the harder he pulled, the tighter they gripped. So he tried not pulling. That brought no results, either.

He listened. There was a faint hiss and purr of traffic outside. He must be still in a city; though, it seemed, a fairly quiet one.

A stair creaked. Park held his breath. Somebody was coming up, and without unnecessary noise. More than one man was, Park thought, listening to the creaks.

Somebody stumbled. From far below a voice called up a question that Park couldn't catch. There were several quick steps and the smack of a fist.

The door of Park's room was ajar. Through the crack appeared a vertical strip of face, including an eye. The eye looked at Park and Park looked at the eye.

The door jerked open and three men pounced into the room. They wore floppy trousers, loose blouses that might have come out of a Russian revue, and round bonnets that hung over one ear. They had large, flat, pentagonal faces, red-brown skins, and straight black hair. They peered behind the door and under the bed.

"What the hell?" asked Allister Park.

The largest of the three men looked at him. "You're not hurt, Hallow?"

"No. But I'm damn sick of being tied up."

The large man's face showed a flicker of surprise. He cut Park's lashings. Park sat up, rubbing his wrists, and learned that he was wearing a suit of coarse woolen underwear.

"Where's that serpent, Noggle?" asked the large brown man. He rolled his r's like a Scot. But he did not look like a Scot. Park thought he might be an American Indian.

"You mean the little gray-haired bird?"

"Sure. You know the scoundrel." He pronounced the "k" in "know."

"Suppose I do. When I woke up he was in that chair. He looked at me and beat it out of here as if all the bats of hell were after him."

"Maybe he's gone daft. But the weighty thing is to get you out." One of the men got a suit out of the closet. It resembled the three men's clothes, but was a somber gray.

Allister Park dressed. The tenseness of the men made him hurry. Working his feet into the elastic-sided shoes with the big metal buckles, Park asked: "How long have I been here?"

"You vanished from the ken of man a week ago today," replied the large man with a keen look.

A week ago today he had been Allister Park, assistant district attorney. The next day he hadn't been. It was probably not a coincidence.

He started to take a look at his new self in the mirror. Before he could do more than glimpse a week's growth of beard, two of the men were gently pulling his arms toward the door with deferential haste. Park went along. He asked: "What do I do now?"

"That takes a bit of thinking on," said the large man. "It mick not be safe for you to go hame. *Sh-h!*" He stole dramatically down the stairs ahead of them. "Of course," he continued, "you could put in a warrant against Joseph Noggle."

"What good would that do?"

"Not much, I fear. If the bustard Noggle was put up to this by MacSvensson, you can be sure the lazy knicks wouldn't find him."

Park had more questions, but he didn't want to give himself away any sooner than he had to.

The house was old, decorated in a curious geometrical style, full of hexagons and spirals. On the ground floor sat another brown man in a rocking chair. In one hand he held a thing like an automobile grease gun with a pistol grip. Across the room sat another man, with a black eye, looking apprehensively at the gun thing.

The one in the chair got up, took off his bonnet, and made a bow toward Park. He said: "Haw, Hallow. Were you hurt?"

"He'll live over it, glory be to Patrick," said the big one, whom the others addressed as "sachem." This person now glowered at the man with the black eye. "Nay alarums, understand? Or"—he drew the tip of his forefinger in a quick circle on the crown of his head. It dawned on Park that he was outlining the part of the scalp that an Indian might remove as a trophy.

THEY went quickly out, glancing up and down the street. It was early morning; few people were visible. Park's four companions surrounded him in a way that suggested that, much as they respected him, he had better not make a break.

The sidewalk had a wood-block paving. At the curb stood a well-streamlined automobile. The engine seemed to be in the rear. From the size of the closed-in section, Park guessed it to be huge.

They got in. The instrument board had more knobs and dials than a transport plane. The sachem started the car noiselessly. Another car blew a resonant whistle and passed them, wagging a huge tail of water vapor. Park grasped the fact that the cars were steam-powered. Hence the smooth, silent operation; hence, also, the bulky engine and the complex controls.

The buildings were large but low; Park saw none over eight or ten stories. The traffic signals had semaphore arms with "STAY" and "COME" on them.

"Where are you taking me?" asked Park.

"Outside the burg bounds, first," said the sachem. "Then we'll think on the next."

Park wondered what was up; they were still respectful as all hell, but there was something ominous about their haste to get outside the "burg bounds," which Park took to be the city limits. He said, experimentally: "I'm half starved."

A couple of the brown men echoed these sentiments, so the sachem presently stopped the car at a restaurant. Park looked around it; except for that odd geometric style of decoration, it was much like other restaurants the world over.

"What's the program?" he asked the sachem. Park had known some heavy drinkers in his time, but never one who washed his breakfast pancakes down with whiskey, as the large brown man was now doing.

"That'll be seen," said the sachem. "What did Noggle try to do to you?"

"Never did find out."

"There's been a rumor about the swapping of minds. I wonder if—Where are you going?"

"Be right back," said Park, heading for the men's room. In another minute the sachem would have cornered him on the question of identity.

They watched him go. Once in the men's room, he climbed onto a sink, opened a window, and squirmed out into the adjacent alley. He put several blocks between himself and his convoyers before he slowed down.

His pockets failed to tell him whose body he had. His only mark of identification was a large gold ring with a Celtic cross. He had a few coins in one pocket, wherewith he bought a newspaper.

Careful searching disclosed the following item:

BISJAP STIL MISING

At a läät aur jestrdäi nee toocan häd ben faund of yi mising Bisjab Ib Scoglund of yi niu Belfäst Bisjapric of yi Celtic Cristjan Tjörtj, hwuuz vänisjing a wiik agoo häz sterd yi börg. Cnicts säi yäi är leeving nee steen öntörnd in yäir straif tu faind yi hwärabauts of yi mising preetjr, hwuuz lösti swink on bihaaf of yi Screlingz häz bimikst him in a fiirs yingli scöfal—

It looked to Park as though some German or Norwegian had tried to spell English—or what passed for English in this city—phonetically according to the rules of his own language, with a little Old English or Anglo-Saxon thrown in. He made a tentative translation:

BISHOP STILL MISSING

At a late hour yesterday no token had been found of the missing Bishop Ib Scoglund of the New Belfast Bishopric of the Celtic Christian Church, whose vanishing a week ago has stirred the burg (city?). Cnicts (police) say they are leaving no stone unturned in their strife (effort?) to find the whereabouts of the missing preacher—

It sounded like him, all right. What a hell of a name, Ib Scoglund! The next step was to find where he lived. If they had telephones, they ought to have telephone directories—

HALF AN HOUR later Park approached the bishop's house. If he were going to change again at midnight, the thing to do would be to find some quiet place, relax, and wait. But he felt that the events of the week made a pattern, of which he thought he could see the beginnings of an outline. If his guesses were right, he had arrived at his destination.

The air was smoky, moderately warm and a bit sticky, as New York City air might well be in April. A woman passed him, leading a floppy-eared dog. She was stout and fiftyish. Park did not think that a skirt that cleared her knees by six inches became her. But that was what was being worn.

As he turned the corner onto what ought to be his block, he sighted a knot of people in front of a house. Two men in funny steeple-crowned hats sat in an open car. They were dressed alike, and Park guessed they were policemen.

Park pulled his bonnet—a thing like a Breton peasant's hat—over one side of his face. He walked past on the opposite side of the street, looking unconcerned. The people were watching No. 64, his number.

There was an alley on one side of the house. Park walked to the next corner, crossed, and started back toward No. 64. He had almost reached the entrance to the alley when one of the men spotted him. With a cry of "There's the bishop himself!" the men on the sidewalk—there were four—ran toward him. The men in the funny hats got out of their vehicle and followed.

Park squared his shoulders. He had faced down ward heelers who invaded his apartment to tell him to lay off certain people or else! But these people were not hostile. They shouted: "Wher-r-re ya been, Hallow?" "Were you kidnaped?" "Ja lose your recall?" "How about a wording?" All produced pads and pencils.

Park felt at home. He asked: "Who's it for?"

One of the men said: "I'm from the *Sooth.*"

"The what?"

"The New Belfast *Sooth.* We've been upholding you on the Skrelling question."

Park looked serious. "I've been investigating conditions."

The men looked puzzled.

Park added: "You know, looking into things."

"Oh," said the man from the *Sooth.* "Peering the kilters, eh?"

The men in the funny hats arrived. One of the pair asked: "Any wrongdoings, bishop? Want to mark in a slur?"

Park, fumbling through the mazes of this dialect, figured that he meant "file a complaint." He said: "No, I'm all right. Thanks, anyway."

"But," cried the hat, "you *sure* you don't want to mark in a slur? We'll take you to the lair if you do."

"No, thank you," said Park. The hats sidled up to him, one on either side. In the friendliest manner they took his arms and gently urged him toward the car, saying: "Sure you want to mark in a slur. We was sent special to get you so you could. If somebody kidnaped you, you must, or its helping wrongdoing, you know. It's just a little way to the lair—"

Park had been doing some quick thinking. They surely had an ulterior reason for wanting to get him to the "lair"—presumably a police station—but manhandling a bishop, especially in the presence of reporters, just wasn't done. He wrenched loose and jumped into the doorway of No. 64. He snapped: "I haven't got any slurs, and I'm not going to your lair, get me?"

"Aw, but Hallow, we wasn't going to hurt you. Only if you have a slur, you have to mark it in. That's the law, see?" The man, his voice a pleading whine, came closer and reached for Park's sleeve. Park cocked a fist, saying: "If you want me for anything, get a warrant. Otherwise the *Sooth'll* have a story about how you tried to kidnap the bishop, and how he knocked the breath out of you!" The reporters made encouraging noises.

The hats gave up and got back in their car. With some remark about "—he'll sure give us hell," they departed.

PARK PULLED the little handle on the door. Something went *bong, bong* inside. The reporters crowded around, asking questions. Park, trying to look the way a bishop should, held up a hand. "I'm very tired, gentlemen, but I'll have a statement for you in a few days."

They were still pestering him when the door opened. Inside, a small monkeylike fellow opened his mouth. "Hallow Colman, keep us from harm!" he cried.

"I'm sure he will," said Park gravely, stepping in. "How about some food?"

"Surely, surely," said Monkey-face. "But . . . but what on earth has your hallowship been doing? I've been fair sick with worry."

"Peering the kilters, old boy, peering the kilters." Park followed Monkey-face upstairs, as if he had intended going that way of his own accord.

Monkey-face doddered into a bedroom and busied himself with getting clean clothes.

Park looked at a mirror. He was—as he had been throughout his metamorphoses—a stocky man with thinning light hair, in his middle thirties. He was not Allister Park, but he was not very different from him.

The reddish stubble on his face would have to come off. In the bathroom Park found no razor. He stumbled on a contraption that might be an electric razor. He pushed the switch experimentally. Instantly he dropped the thing with a yell. It had bitten a piece out of his thumb. Holding the injured member, Park cut loose with the condemnatory vocabulary that ten years of work among New York City's criminal class had given him.

Monkey-face stood in the doorway, eyes big. Park stopped his swearing long enough to rasp: "Damn your lousy little soul, don't stand there! Get me a bandage!"

The little man obeyed. He applied the bandage as though he expected Park to begin the practice of cannibalism on him at any moment.

"What's the matter?" said Park. "I won't bite you!"

Monkey-face looked up. "Begging pardon, your hallowship, but I thock you wouldn't allow the swearing of aiths in your presence. And now such fricgful aiths I never did hear."

"Oh," said Park. He remembered the penetrating look the sachem had given his mild damns and hells. Naturally a bishop would not use such language—at least not where he could be overheard.

"You'd better finish my shave," he said.

Monkey-face still looked uneasy. "Begging your pardon again, Hallow, but what makes you talk such a queer speech?"

"Canker sore," growled Park.

Shaved, he felt better. He bent a kindly look on Monkey-face. "Listen," he said, "your bishop has been consorting with low, uncouth persons for the past week. So don't mind it if I fall into their way of speaking. Only don't tell anybody, see? Sorry I jumped on you just now. Do you accept my apology?"

"Yes . . . yes, of course, Hallow."

"All right, then. How about that famous breakfast?"

After breakfast he took his newspaper and the pile of mail into the bishop's well-equipped library. He looked up "Screling" in the "Wordbuk," or dictionary. A "Screling" was defined as one of the aboriginal inhabitants of Vinland.

"Vinland" stirred a faint chord; something he'd learned in school. The atlas contained a map of North America. A large area in the north and east thereof, bounded on the west and south by an irregular line running roughly from Charleston to Winnipeg, was labeled the Bretwaaldäät of Vinland. The remaining two thirds of the continent comprised half a dozen political areas, with such names as Däcoosja, Tjeroogia, Mehicoo. Park,

referring back to the dictionary, derived these from Dakota, Cherokee, Mexico, et cetera.

In a couple of hours telephone calls began coming in. Monkey-face, according to his instructions, told one and all that the bishop was resting up and couldn't be disturbed. Park meanwhile located a rack of pipes in the library and a can of tobacco. He got out several pads of paper and sharpened a dozen pencils.

Monkey-face announced lunch. Park told him to bring it in. He announced dinner. Park told him to bring it in. He announced bedtime. Park told him to go soak his head. He went, clucking. He had never seen a man work with such a fury of concentration for so long at a stretch, let alone his master. But, then, he had never seen Allister Park reviewing the evidence for a big criminal case.

History, according to the encyclopedia, was much the same as Park remembered it down to the Dark Ages. Tracing down the point at which the divergence took place, he located the fact that King Oswiu of Northumbria had decided in favor of the Celtic Christian Church at the Synod of Whitby, 664 A. D. Park had never heard of the Synod or of King Oswiu. But the encyclopedia ascribed to this decision the rapid spread of the Celtic form of Christianity over Great Britain and Scandinavia. Hence it seemed to Park that probably, in the history of the world *he* had come from, the king had decided the other way.

The Roman Christian Church had held most of its ground in northern Europe for a century more. But the fate of its influence there had been sealed by the defeat of the Franks by the Arabs at Tours. The Arabs had occupied all southern Gaul before they were finally stopped, and according to the atlas they were still there. The Pope and the Lombard duchies of Italy had at once placed themselves under the protection of the Byzantine emperor, Leo the Iconoclast. A Greek-speaking "Roman" Empire still occupied Anatolia and the Balkans, under a Serbian dynasty.

A Danish King of England named Gorm had brought both the British Isles and Scandinavia under his rule, as Knut had once done in Park's world. But Gorm's kingdom proved more durable than Knut's; the connection between England and Scandinavia had survived, despite intervals of disunion and civil war, down to the present. North America was discovered by one Ketil Ingolfsson in 989 A. D. Enough Norse, English, and Irish colonists had migrated thither during the eleventh century to found a permanent colony, from which the Bretwaldate of Vinland had grown. Their language, while descended from Anglo-Saxon, naturally contained fewer words of Latin and French origin than Park's English.

The Indians—"Screlingz" or Skrellings—had not proved a pushover, as the colonists had neither the gunpowder nor the numbers that the whites of Park's history had had. By the time the whites had reached the present boundaries of Vinland, expelling or enslaving the Skrellings as they went,

the remaining natives had acquired enough knowledge of ferrous metallurgy and organized warfare to hold their own. Those that remained in Vinland were no longer slaves, but were still a suppressed class suffering legal and economic disabilities. He, Bishop Ib Scoglund, was a crusader for the removal of these disabilities. "Hallow" was simply a respectful epithet, meaning about the same as "Reverend."

An Italian named Caravello had invented the steam engine about 1690, and the Industrial Revolution had followed as a matter of course—

It was the following morning when Park, having caught the three hours of sleep that sufficed for him when necessary, was back at the books, that Monkey-face—correct name: Eric Dunedin—came timidly in. He coughed deferentially. "The pigeon came with a writing from Thane Callahan."

Park frowned up from his mountain of printed matter. "Who? Never mind; let's see it." He took the note. It read (spelling conventionalized):

Dear Hallow: Why in the name of the martyrs of Belfast did you run away from us yesterday? The papers say you have gone back home; isn't that risky? Must have a meeting with you forthwith; shall be at Bridget's Beach this noon, waiting. Respectfully, R. C.

Park asked Dunedin: "Tell me, is Callahan a tall, heavy guy who looks like an In . . . a Skrelling?"

Dunedin looked at him oddly. By this time Park was getting pretty well used to being looked at oddly. Dunedin said: "But he *is* a Skrelling, Hallow; the sachem of all the Skrellings of Vinland."

"Hm-m-m. So he'll meet me at this beach. Why the devil can't he come here?"

"O-o-oh, but Hallow, remember what happened to him the last time the New Belfast knicks caught him!"

Whatever that was, Park reckoned he owed the sachem something for the rescue from the clutches of the mysterious Mr. Noggle. The note didn't sound like one from a would-be abductor to his escaped prey. But just in case, Park went out to the modest episcopal automobile—Dunedin called it a "wain"—and put a wrench in his pocket. He told Dunedin: "You'll have to drive this thing; my thumb's still sore."

It took a few minutes to get steam up. As they rolled out of the driveway, a car parked across the street started up, too. Park got a glimpse of the men therein. While they were in civilian clothes, as he was, they had a grim plain-clothes-man look about them.

After three blocks the other car was still behind them. Park ordered Dunedin to go around the block. The other car followed.

Park asked: "Can you shake those guys?"

"I . . . I don't know, your hallowship. I'm not very good at fast driving."

"Slide over, then. How in hell do you run this thing?"

"You mean you don't know—"

"Never mind!" roared Park. "Where's the accelerator, or throttle, or whatever you call it?"

"Oh, the strangle. There." Dunedin pointed a frankly terrified finger. "And the brake—"

The wain jumped ahead with a rush. Park spun it around a couple of corners, getting the feel of the wheel. The mirror showed the other car still following. Park opened the "strangle" and whisked around the next corner. No sooner had he straightened out than he threw the car into another dizzy turn. The tires screeched and Dunedin yelped as they shot into an alleyway. The pursuers whizzed by without seeing them.

An egg-bald man in shirt sleeves popped out of a door in the alley. "Hi," he said, "this ain't no hitching place." He looked at Park's left front fender, clucking. "Looks like you took off some paint."

Park smiled. "I was just looking for a room and I saw your sign. How much are you asking?"

"Forty-five a month."

Park made a show of writing this down. He asked: "What's the address, please?"

"Ane twenty-five Isleif."

"Thanks. I'll be back, maybe." Park backed out, with a scrape of fender against stone, and asked Dunedin directions. Dunedin, gray of face, gave them. Park looked at him and chuckled. "Nothing to be scared of, old boy. I knew I had a good two inches clearance on both sides."

THE sachem awaited Park in the shade of the bathhouse. He swept off his bonnet with a theatrical flourish. "Haw, Hallow! A fair day for our tryst." Park reflected that on a dull day you could smell Rufus Callahan's breath almost as far as you could see Rufus Callahan. He continued: "The west end's best for talk. I have a local knick watching in case Greenfield sends a prowler. Did they follow you out?"

Park told him, meanwhile wondering how to handle the interview so as to make it yield the most information. They passed the end of the bathhouse, and Allister Park checked his stride. The beach was covered with naked men and women. Not *quite* naked; each had a gayly colored belt of elastic webbing around his or her middle. Just that. Park resumed his walk at Callahan's amused look.

Callahan said: "If the head knick, Lewis, weren't a friend of mine, I shouldn't be here. If I ever did get pulled up—well, the judges are all MacSvensson's men, just as Greenfield is." Park remembered that Offa Greenfield was mayor of New Belfast. Callahan continued: "While MacSvensson's away, the pushing eases a little."

"When's he due back?" asked Park.

"In a week, maybe." Callahan waved an arm toward distant New Bel-

fast. "What a fair burg, and what a wretched wick to rule it! How do you like it?"

"Why, I live there, don't I?"

Callahan chuckled. "Wonderful, my dear Hallow, wonderful. In another week nobody'll know you aren't his hallowship at all."

It wasn't a comfortable way to move about, but the local cops didn't seem to know the method—

"Meaning what?"

"Oh, you needn't look at me with that wooden face. You're nay mair Bishop Scoglund than I am."

"Yeah?" said Park noncommittally. He lit one of the bishop's pipes.

"How about a jinn?" asked Callahan.

Park looked at him until the sachem got out a cigarette. Park lit it for him, silently conceding one to the opposition. How was he to know that a jinn was a match? He asked: "Suppose I was hit on the head?"

The big Skrelling grinned broadly. "That mick spoil your recall in spots, but it wouldn't give you that frickful accent you were using when we rescued you. I see you've gotten rid of most of it, by the way. How did you do that in thirty-some hours?"

Park gave up. The man might be just a slightly drunken Indian with a conspiratorial manner, but he had the goods on Allister. He explained: "I found a bunch of records of some of my sermons and played them over and over on the machine."

"My, my, you are a cool one! Joe Noggle mick have done worse when he picked your mind to swap with the bishop's. Who are you, in sooth? Or perhaps I should say, who were you?"

Park puffed placidly. "I'll exchange information, but I won't give it away."

Callahan agreed to tell Park all he wanted to know. So Park told his story. Callahan looked thoughtful. He said: "I'm nay psychophysicist, but they do say there's a theory that every time the history of the world hinges on some decision there are two worlds, ane that which would happen if the card fell ane way, the other that which would follow fro the other."

"Which is the *real* one?"

"That I can't tell you. But they do say Noggle can swap minds with his thocks, and I don't doubt it's swapping between ane of these possible worlds and another they mean."

CALLAHAN went on to tell Park of the bishop's efforts to emancipate the Skrellings, in the teeth of the opposition of the ruling Diamond Party. This party's strength was mainly among the rural squirearchy of the west and south, but it also controlled New Belfast through the local boss, Ivor MacSvensson.

If Scoglund's Equal Rights Amendments to the Bretwaldate's constitution went through at the next session of the Althing, or national parliament, as seemed likely if the Ruby Party ousted the Diamonds at the forthcoming election, the squirearchy might revolt. The independent Skrelling nations of the west and south had been threatening intervention on behalf of their abused minority. That sounded familiar to Park, except that if he took what he had read and heard at its face value, the minority really had something to kick about. The Diamonds wouldn't mind a war, because in that case the elections, which they expected to lose, would be called off—

"You're not listening, Thane Park, or should I say Hallow Scoglund?"

"Nice little number," said Park, nodding toward a pretty blond girl on the beach.

Callahan clucked. "Such a wording from a strict celibate!"

"What?"

"You're a pillar of the church, aren't you?"

"Oh, my Lord!" Park hadn't thought of that angle. The Celtic Christian Church, despite its libertarian tradition, was strict on one subject.

"Anyhow," said Callahan, "what shall we do with you? For you're bound to arouse mistrust."

Park felt the wrench in his pocket. *"I* want to get *back.* Got a whole career going to smash in my own world."

"Unless the fellow who's running your body knows what to do with it."

"Not much chance." Park could visualize Frenczko or Burt frantically calling his apartment to learn why he didn't appear; the unintelligible answers they would get from the bewildered inhabitant of his body; the cops screaming up in the struggle buggy to cart the said body off to Bellevue; the headlines: "PROSECUTOR BREAKS DOWN." So, thought Allister Park, these birds yanked me out of my comfortable existence just as a bit of dirty politics, huh? I'll get back, all right, but meantime I'll show these lice some *real* politics. When I get through with them they'll feel as if they'd tried to stop a buzz saw with their bare hands!

Callahan continued: "The only man who could unswap you is Joseph Noggle, and he's in his own daffy bin."

"Huh?"

"They found him wandering about, clean daft. It's a good deed you didn't put in a slur against him; they'd have stripped you in court in nay time."

"Maybe that's what they wanted to do."

"That's an idea! That's why they were so anxious for you to go to the lair. I don't doubt they'll be watching for to pull you up on some little charge; it won't matter whether you're guilty or not. Once they get hold of you, you're headed for Noggle's inn. What a way to get rid of the awkward bishop without pipe or knife!"

WHEN Callahan had departed with another flourish, Park looked for the girl. She had gone, too. The day was blistering and the water inviting. Since you didn't need a bathing suit to swim in Vinland, why not try it?

Park returned to the bathhouse and rented a locker. He stowed his clothes and looked at himself in the nearest mirror. The bishop didn't take half enough exercise, he thought, looking at the waistline. He'd soon fix *that.* No excuse for a man's getting out of shape that way.

He strolled out, feeling a bit exposed with his white skin among all these bronzed people, but not showing it in his well-disciplined face. A few stared. Maybe it was his whiteness; maybe they thought they recognized the bishop.

He plunged in and headed out. He swam like a porpoise, but shortness of breath soon reminded him that the bishop's body wasn't up to Allister Park's standards. He cut loose with a few casual curses, since there was nobody to overhear, and swam back.

As he dripped out onto the sand a policeman loomed, thundering: "You! You're under arrest!"

"What for?"

"Shameful exposure!"

"But look at those!" protested Park, waving at the other bathers.

"That's just it! Come along, now!"

Park went, forgetting his anger in concern as to the best method of avoiding trouble. If the judges were MacSvensson men, and MacSvensson was out to expose him— He dressed under the cop's eagle eye, thanking his stars he'd had the foresight to wear nonclerical clothes.

THE COP ordered: "Give your name and address to the clark."

"Allister Park, 125 Isleif Street, New Belfast."

The clerk filled out a blank; the cop added a few lines to it. Park and the cop went and sat down for a while, waiting. Park watched the legal procedure of this little court keenly.

The clerk called: "Thane Park!" and handed the form up to the judge. The cop went over and whispered to the judge. The judge said: "All women will please leave the courtroom!" There were only three; they went out.

"Allister Park," said the judge, "you are marked with shameful exposure. How do you plead?"

"I don't understand this, your honor," said Park. "I wasn't doing anything the other people on the beach weren't."

The judge frowned. "Knick Woodson says you deliberately exposed . . . uh—" The judge looked embarrassed. "You deliberately exposed your . . . uh"—he lowered his voice—"your navel," he hissed. The judge was blushing a bit.

"Is that considered indecent?"

"Don't try to be funny. It's not in good taste. I ask you again, how do you plead?"

Park hesitated a second. "Do you recognize the plea of *non vult?*"

"What's that? Latin? We don't use Latin here."

"Well, then—a plea that I didn't mean any harm, and am throwing myself on the mercy of the court."

"Oh, you mean a plea of good will. That's not ordinarily used in a magistrate's court, but I don't see why you can't. What's your excuse?"

"You see, your honor, I've been living out in Dakotia for many years, and I've rather gotten out of civilized habits. But I'll catch on quickly enough. If you want a character reference, my friend, Ivor MacSvensson will give me one."

The judge's eyebrows went up like a buzzard hoisting its wings for the take-off. "You know Thane MacSvensson?"

"Oh, sure."

"Hr-r-rmph. Well. He's out of town. But . . . uh . . . if that's so, I'm sure you're a good citizen. I hereby sentence you to ten days in jail, sentence withheld until I can check your character, and thereafter on your good acting. You are dismissed."

IV.

LIKE a good thane's thane, Eric Dunedin kept his curiosity to himself. This became an heroic task when he was sent out to buy a bottle of soluble hair dye, a false mustache, and a pair of phony spectacles with flat glass panes in them.

There was no doubt about it; the boss was a changed man since his reappearance. He had raised Dunedin's salary, and, except for occasional outbursts of choler, treated him very considerately. The weird accent had largely disappeared; but this hard, inscrutable man still wasn't the bishop that Dunedin had known.

Park presented himself in his disguise to the renting agent at 125 Isleif. He said: "Remember me? I was here this morning asking about a room." The man said sure, he remembered him; he never forgot a face. Park rented a small two-room apartment, calling himself Allister Park. Later in the evening he took over a folder of etchings, some books, and a couple of suitcases full of clothes. When he returned to the bishop's house he found another car with a couple of large watchful men waiting at the curb. Rather than risk contact with a hostile authority, he went back to his new apartment and read. Around midnight he dropped in at a small hashhouse for a cup of coffee. In fifteen minutes he was calling the waitress "sweetie pie."

DUNEDIN looked out the window and announced: "Two wains and five knicks, Hallow. The second wain drew up just now. The men in it look as if they'd eat their own mothers without salt."

Park thought. He had to get out somehow. He had looked into the subject of search warrants, illegal entry, and so forth, as practiced in the Bretwaldate of Vinland, and was reasonably sure the detectives wouldn't invade his house. The laws of Vinland gave what Park thought was an impractically exaggerated sanctity to a man's home, but he was glad of that as things were. But if he stepped out, the pack would be all over him with charges of drunken driving, conspiracy to violate the tobacco tax, and anything else they could think of.

He telephoned the "knicks' branch," or police department, and spoke thus in falsetto: "Are you the knicks? . . . Glory be to Patrick and Bridget! I'm Wife Caroline Chisholm, at 79 Mercia, and we have a crazy man running up and down the halls naked with an ax! . . . Sure, he's killed my poor husband already; spattered his brains all over the hall, he did, and

I'm locked in my room and expecting him to break in any time!" Park stamped on the floor and continued: "Ee-ek! That's the monster now, trying to break the door down. Oh, hurry, please! He's shouting that he's going to chop me in little bits and feed me to his cat! . . . Yes, 79 Mercia Street. Ee-e-e-e! Save me!"

He hung up and went back to the window. In five minutes the gongs of the police wains sounded, and three of the vehicles skidded around the corner and stopped in front of No. 79, down the block. Funny hats tumbled out like oranges from a burst paper bag and raced up the front steps with guns and ropes enough to handle Gargantua. The five who had been watching the house got out of their cars, too, and ran down the block.

Allister Park lit his pipe and strode briskly out the front door, down the street away from the disturbance, and around the corner.

PARK was announced, as Bishop Scoglund, to Dr. Edwy Borup. The head of the Psychophysical Institute was a smallish, bald, snaggle-toothed man. He smiled with an uneasy cordiality.

Park smiled back. "Wonderful work you've been doing, Dr. Borup." He went on to hand out a few more vague compliments, then got down to business. "I understand that poor Dr. Noggle is now one of your patients?"

"Um-m . . . uh . . . yes, Reverend Hallow, he is. Uh . . . his lusty swink seems to have brock on a mental breakdown."

Park sighed. "The good Lord will see him through, let us hope. I wonder if I could see him? I had some small kenning of him before his trouble. He once told me he'd like my ghostly guidance when he got around to it."

"Well . . . um-m . . . I'm not sure it would be wise . . . in his kilter—"

"Oh, come now, Dr. Borup, surely thoughts of higher things would be good for him—"

The sharp-nosed, gray-haired man who had been Joseph Noggle sat morosely in his room. He hardly bothered to look up when Park entered.

"Well, my friend," said Park, "what have they been doing to you?"

"Nothing," said the man. His voice had a nervous edge. "That's the trouble. Every day I'm a different man in a different sanitarium. Each day they tell me that two days previously I got violent and kicked somebody in the teeth. *I* haven't kicked *nobody* in the teeth. Why in God's name don't they *do* something? Sure, I know I'm crazy. I'll co-operate, if they will *do* something."

"There, there," said Park. "The good Lord watches over all of us. By the way, what were you before your trouble started?"

"I tock singing."

Park thought several "frickful aiths." If a singing teacher, or somebody equally incompetent for his kind of work, were in his own body now—

He talked soothingly and inconsequentially to the man. Finally he got what he was waiting for. A husky male nurse came in to take the patient's

temperature. Park hung around until the nurse had finished. He followed the nurse out and grasped his arm.

"What is it, Hallow?" asked the nurse.

"Are you poor Noggle's regular attendant?"

"Yes."

"Got any relatives, or people you like specially, in the church?"

"Yes, there's my Aunt Thyra. She's a nun at the New Lindisfarne Abbey."

"Like to see her advanced?"

"Why . . . I guess so; yes. She's always been pretty good to me."

"All right. Here's what you do. Can you get out, or send somebody out, to telephone Noggle's condition to me every morning before noon?"

The nurse guessed he could. "All right," snapped Park. "And don't tell anybody, get me?" He realized that his public-prosecutor manner was creeping back on him. He smiled benignly. "The Lord will bless you, my son."

PARK telephoned Dunedin; asked him to learn the name of somebody who lived on the top floor of the apartment house next door and to collect one ladder, thirty feet of rope, and one brick. He made him call back the name of the top-floor tenant. "But, Hallow, what in the name of Patrick do you want a brick for—"

Park, chuckling, told him he'd learn. When he got off the folk-wain at Mercia Street, he didn't walk boldly up to his own house. He entered the apartment house next door and said he was calling on Wife Figgis. His clericals were adequate credentials. When the elevator man let him out on the top floor he climbed to the roof and whistled for Monkey-face. He directed Dunedin in the tying of the end of the rope to the brick, the heaving thereof to the roof of the apartment house, and the planting of the ladder to bridge the ten-foot gap. After that it was a simple matter for Park to lower himself to his own roof without being intercepted by the watchdogs in front of his house.

As soon as he got in the phone rang. A sweetness-and-light voice at the other end said: "This is Cooley, Hallow. Every time I've called, your man has said you were out or else that you couldn't be bothered."

"That's right," said Park. "I was."

"Yes? Anyway, we're all giving praises to the Lord that you were spared."

"That's fine," said Park.

"It surely is a wonderful case of how His love watches over us—"

"What's on your mind, Cooley?" said Park, sternly repressing a snarl of impatience.

"Oh . . . uh . . . what I meant was, will you give your regular sermon next Sunday?"

Park thought quickly. If he could give a sermon and get away with it,

it ought to discourage the people who were trying to prove the bishop was looney. "O. K. Sure I will. Where are you calling from?"

"Why . . . uh . . . the vestry." Some damned assistant, thought Park. "But, Hallow, won't you come up tonight? I'm getting some of the parishioners together in the chapel for a private thanksgiving service with hymns—"

"I'm afraid not," said Park. "Give 'em my love, anyway. There goes my doorbell. 'By."

He marched into the library, muttering. Dunedin asked: "What is it, Hallow?"

"Gotta prepare a goddam sermon," said Park, taking some small pleasure at his thane's thane's expression of horror.

Fortunately the bishop was an orderly man. There were manuscripts of all his sermons for the past five years, and phonograph records—in the form of magnetized wire—of several. There was also plenty of information about the order of procedure in a Celtic Christian service. Park set about concocting a sermon out of fragments and paragraphs of those the bishop had delivered during the past year, playing the spools of wire over and over to learn the bishop's inflections.

He was still at it the next day when he dimly heard the doorbell. He thought nothing of it, trusting to Dunedin to turn the visitor away, until Monkey-face came in and announced that a pair of knicks awaited without.

Park jumped up. "Did you let 'em in?"

"No, Hallow, I thought—"

"Good boy! I'll take care of 'em."

THE SMALLER of the two cops smiled disarmingly. "Kin we come in, Hallow, to use your wire talker?"

"Nope," said Park. "Sorry."

The knick frowned. "In that case we gotta come in, anyway. Suspicion of unlawful owning of pipe." He put his foot in the door crack.

A pipe, Park knew, was a gun. He turned and stamped on the toe of the shoe, hard; then slammed the door shut as the foot was jerked back. There were some seconds of "frickful aiths" wafting through the door, then the pounding of a fist against it.

"Get a warrant!" Park yelled. The noise subsided. Park called Dunedin and told him to lock the other entrances. Presently the knicks departed. Park's inference that they would not force an entrance without a warrant had proved correct. But they would be back. And there is nothing especially difficult about "finding" an illegal weapon in a man's house.

So Park packed a suitcase, climbed to the roof of the adjoining apartment, and went down the elevator. The elevator man looked at him in a marked manner. Once in the street, he made sure nobody was looking and slapped on his mustache and glasses. He pulled his bonnet well down to hide his undyed hair and walked over to Allister Park's place. There he

telephoned Dunedin. He directed him to call the city editors of all the pro-bishop newspapers and tip them off that an attempt to frame the bishop impended. He told Dunedin to let the reporters in when they came; the more the better. Now, he thought, let those flatfeet try to sneak a gun into one of my bureau drawers so they can "find" it.

He spent the night at the apartment. The next day, having gotten his sermon in shape, he paid a visit to his church. He found a functionary of some sort in an office and told him that he, Allister Park, was considering getting married in Hallow Columbanus', and would the functionary—a Th. Morgan—please show him around? Th. Morgan was pleased to; Dr. Cooley usually did that job, but he was out this afternoon. Park looked sharply through his phony spectacles, memorizing the geography of the place. He wished now he'd passed up the sermon for one more week and had, instead, attended next Sunday's service as Allister Park, so that he could see how the thing was done.

Th. Morgan broke in on his thoughts: "There's Dr. Cooley now, Thane Park; wouldn't you like to meet him?"

"Ulp," said Park. "Sorry; got to see a man. Thanks a lot." Before the startled cleric could protest, Park was making for the door as fast as he could go without breaking into a run. Park had no intention of submitting his rather thin disguise to his assistant's inspection.

He telephoned the bishop's home. The other people in the lunchroom were startled by the roar of laughter that came through the glass of his booth as Dunedin described the two unhappy cops trying to plant a gun in his house under the noses of a dozen hostile wisecracking reporters. Monkey-face added: "I . . . I took the liberty, your hallowship, of finding out that two of the newsers live right near here. If the knicks try that again, and these newsers are at home, we could wire-call them over."

"You're learning fast, brother," said Park. "Guess I can come home now."

V.

It was Saturday when Dunedin answered a call from the Psychopathic Institute. He cocked an eye upward, whence came a series of irregular *whams,* as if trunks were being tossed downstairs. "Yes," he said, "I'll get his hallowship." As he wheezed upstairs, the *whams* gave way to a quick, muffled drumming. If anything were needed to convince Dunedin that something drastic had happened to his master, the installation and regular use of a horizontal bar and a punching bag in a disused room was it.

Park, in a pair of sweat-soaked shorts, answered the call. The male nurse told him that, today, Joseph Noggle was claiming to be Joseph Noggle.

Dr. Edwy Borup made difficulties. "My dear, dear Hallow, why must you see this particular . . . uh . . . patient? There's plenty mair could use your ghostly guidance."

Fool amateur, thought Park, giving his little game away as easily as all that. Aloud he gave a few smooth, pious excuses and got in to see his man.

The authentic Noggle had a quick, nervous manner. It didn't take him long to catch on to who Park-Scoglund was.

"Look here," he said. "Look here. I've got to get out. I've got to get at my books and notes. If I don't get out now while I'm in my own body I shan't be able to stop this damned merry-go-round for another six days."

"You mean, my son, that you occupy your own body once every six days? What happens the rest of the time?"

"The rest of the time I'm going around the wheel, in-dwelling ane after another of the bodies of the other men on my wheel. And the minds of these other men are following me around likewise. So every ane of the six bodies has each of our six minds in it in turn every six days."

"I see." Park smiled benignly. "And what's this wheel you talk about?"

"I call it my wheel of if. Each of the other five men on it are the men I should most likely have been *if* certain things had been different. For instance, the man in whose body my mind dwelt yesterday was the man I should most likely have been if King Egbert had fallen off his horse in 1781."

Park didn't inquire about the sad results of King Egbert's poor equestrianism. He asked softly: "How did your wheel get started in the first place?"

"It was when I tried to stop yours! Law of conservation of psychic momentum, you know. I got careless, and the momentum of your wheel was transferred to mine. So I've been going around ever since. Now look here, whatever your name is, I've got to get out of here or I'll never get stopped. I ordered them to let me out this morning, but all they'd say was that they'd see about it tomorrow. Tomorrow my body'll be occupied by some other wheelmate, and they'll say I'm crazy again. Borup won't let me go, anyway, if he can help it; he likes my job. But you've got to use your influence as bishop—"

"Oh," said Park silkily, "I've got to use my influence, eh? Just one more question. Are we all on wheels? And how many of these possible worlds are there?"

"Yes, we're all on wheels. The average number of places on a wheel is fourteen—that's the number on yours—though it sometimes varies. The number of worlds is infinite, or almost, so that the chances that anybody on my wheel would be living in the same world as anybody on yours is pretty small. But that's not weightful. The weightful thing is to get me out so—"

"Ah, yes, that's the weightful thing, isn't it? But suppose you tell me why you started my wheel in the first place?"

"It was just an experiment in the mental control of wheels."

"You're lying," said Park softly.

"Oh, I'm lying, am I? Well, then, figure out your ain reason."

"I'm sorry that you take this attitude, my son. How can I help you if you won't put your trust in me and in God?"

"*Oh, come on, don't play-act You're not the bishop, and you know it.*"

"*Ah, but I was a churchman in my former existence.*" Park fairly oozed holiness. "That's not surprising, is it? Since I was the man the bishop would most likely have been if King Oswiu had decided in favor of the Romans, and the Arabs had lost the battle of Tours."

"You'd hold yourself bound by professional confidence?"

Park looked shocked. "What a suggestion! Of course I would."

"ALL RIGHT. I'm something of a sportsman, you know. About a month ago I got badly pinched by the ponies, and I . . . ah . . . borrowed a little advance on my salary from the Institute's funds. Of course, I've paid it back. But I had to make a few little . . . ah . . . corrections in the books, because otherwise ane who didn't understand the factings might have drawn the wrong answers from them.

"Ivor MacSvensson somehow found out and threatened to put me in jail if I didn't use my mental powers to start your wheel of if going until it had made a half turn, and then stop it. With another man's mind in the bishop's body, it ock to be easy to prove the bishop daft; in any event, his influence would be destroyed. But as you know, it didn't work that way. You evidently aren't in anybody's custody. So you'll have to do something to get me out."

Park leaned forward and fixed Noggle with the bishop's fish-pale eyes. He said harshly: "You know, Noggle, I admire you. For a guy who robs his hospital, and then to get out of it goes and starts fourteen men's minds spinning around, ruining their lives and maybe driving some of them crazy or to suicide, you have more unmitigated gall than a barn rat. You sit there and tell me, one of your victims, that I'll have to do something to get you out! Why, damn your lousy little soul, if you ever *do* get out, I'll give you a case of lumps that'll make you think somebody dropped a mountain on you!"

Noggle paled a bit. "Then . . . then you weren't a churchman in your ain world?"

"Hell, no. My business was putting lice like you in jail. And I still ought to be able to manage that here, with what you so kindly told me just now."

Noggle swallowed as this sank in. "But . . . you promised—"

Park laughed unpleasantly. "Sure I did. I never let a little thing like a promise to a crook keep me awake nights."

"But you want to get back, don't you? And I'm the only wick who can send you back, and you'll have to get me out of here before I can do anything—"

"There is that," said Park thoughtfully. "But I don't know. Maybe I'll like it here when I get used to it. I can always have the fun of coming around here every sixth day and giving you the horselaugh."

"You're a devil," said Noggle.

Park laughed again. "Thanks. You thought you'd get some poor bewildered dimwit in Scoglund's body, didn't you? Well, you'll learn just how wrong you were." He stood up. "I'll let you stay here awhile more as Dr. Borup's prize loony. Maybe when you've been taken down a peg we can talk business. Meanwhile, you might form a club with those other five guys no your wheel. You could leave notes around for each other to find. So long, Dr. Svengali."

Ten minutes later Park was in Borup's office, with a bland, episcopal smile on his face. He asked Borup a lot of questions about the rules involving commitment and release of inmates.

"Nay," said Edwy Borup firmly, "we could . . . uh . . . parole a patient in your care only if he were rick most of the time. Those that are wrong most of the time, like poor Dr. Noggle, have to stay here."

It was all very definite. But Park had known lots of people who were just as definite until pressure was brought to bear on them from the right quarter.

THE NEARER the Sunday service came, the colder became Allister Park's feet. Which, for such an aggressive, self-confident man, was peculiar. But when he thought of all the little details, the kneeling and getting up again, the facing this way and that— He telephoned Cooley at the cathedral. He had, he said, a cold, and would Cooley handle everything but the sermon? "Surely, Hallow, surely. The Lord will see to it that you're fully restored soon, I hope. I'll say a special prayer for you."

It was also time, Park thought, to take Monkey-face into his confidence. He told him all, whereat Dunedin's eyes grew very large. "Now, old boy," said Park briskly, "if you ever want to get your master back into his own body, you'll have to help me out. For instance, here's that damned sermon. I'm going to read it, and you'll correct my pronunciation and gestures."

Sunday afternoon Park returned wearily to the bishop's house. The sermon had gone off easily enough; but then he'd had to greet hundreds of people he didn't know as if they were old friends. And he'd had to parry scores of questions about his absence. He had, he thought, earned a drink.

"A highball?" asked Dunedin. "What's that?"

Park explained. Dunedin looked positively shocked. "But Thane P— I mean Hallow—isn't it bad for your insides to drink such cold stuff?"

"Never mind my insides! I'll— Hullo, who's that?"

Dunedin answered the doorbell and reported that a Th. Figgis wanted to see the bishop. Park said to show him in. There was something familiar about that name. The man himself was tall, angular, and grim-looking. As soon as Dunedin had gone, he leaned forward and hissed dramatically: "I've got you now, Bishop Scoglund! What are you going to do about it?"

"What am I going to do about *what?*"

"My wife!"

"What about your wife?"

"You know well enough. You went up to my rooms last Tuesday, while I was away, and came down again Wednesday."

"Don't be an ass," said Park. "I've never been in your rooms in my life, and I've never met your wife."

"Oh, yes? Don't try to fool me, you wolf in sheep's clothing. I've got witnesses. By God, I'll fix you, you seducer!"

"Oh, that!" Park grinned and explained his ladder-and-rope procedure.

"Think I believe that?" sneered Figgis. "If you weren't a clergyman, I'd challenge you and cut your liver out and eat it. As it is, I can make things so hot for you—"

"Now, now," interrupted Park. "Be reasonable. I'm sure we can come to an understanding—"

"Trying to bribe me, huh?"

"I wouldn't put it just that way."

"So you think you can buy my honor, do you? Well, what's your offer?"

Park sighed. "I thought so. Just another blackmailer. Get out, louse!"

"But aren't you going to—"

Park jumped up, spun Figgis around and marched him toward the door. "Out, I said! If you think you can get away with spreading your little scandal around, go to it. You'll learn that you aren't the only one who knows things about other people." Figgis tried to wiggle loose. Park kicked him into submission and sent him staggering down the front steps with a final shove.

Dunedin looked awedly at this formidable creature into which his master had metamorphosed. "Do you really know something to keep him quiet, Hallow?"

"Nope. But my experience is that most men of his age have something they'd rather not have known. Anyway, you've got to take a strong line with these blackmailers, or they'll raise no end of hell. Of course, my son, *we* hope the good Lord will show our erring brother the folly of his sinful ways, don't we?" Park winked.

VI.

Being a bishop entailed much more than spending one hour at the cathedral every Sunday, as Park soon learned. But he transacted as much of his episcopal business as he could at home and put the rest onto Cooley. He didn't yet feel that his impersonation was good enough for close-range examination by his subordinates.

An accident unexpectedly opened the way for his next step. He had just settled himself in the Isleif Street apartment the evening of Tuesday, April 26th, when a young man rang his doorbell. It took Park about six seconds to diagnose the young man as a fledgling lawyer getting a start on a political career as a precinct worker.

"No," said Park, "I won't sign your petition to nominate Thane Ham-

mar, because I don't know him. I've just moved here from Dakotia. But I'd like to come around to the clubhouse and meet the boys."

The young man glowed. "Why don't you? There's a meeting of the hide workers tomorrow night, and voters are always welcome."

THE clubhouse had phony Viking shields and weapons on the walls.

"Who's he?" Park asked his young lawyer. "He" was a florid man to whom several people were paying obsequious attention.

"That's Trigvy Darling, Brahtz's parasite." Park caught a note of dislike and added it to the new card in his mental index file. Brahtz was a Diamond thingman from a western province, and the leader of the squirearchy. In this somewhat naïve culture, a gentleman had to demonstrate his financial standing by supporting a flock of idle friends, or deputy gentlemen. The name of parasite was not merely accurate, but was accepted by these hangers-on without any feeling of derogation.

Through the haze wove an unpleasantly familiar angular figure. Park's grip on the edge of the table automatically tightened. "Haw, Morrow," said Figgis, and looked at Park. "Haven't I met you somewhere?"

"Maybe," said Park. "Ever live in Dakotia?"

Morrow, the young lawyer, introduced Park as Park. Park fervently hoped his disguise was thick enough. Figgis acknowledged the introduction, but continued to shoot uneasy little glances at Park. "I could swear—" he said.

Just then the meeting was called. It would have driven a lot of people to suicide from boredom. But Park enjoyed the interplay of personalities, the quick fencing of parliamentary rules by various factions. These rules differed from those he was used to, being derived from those of the ancient Icelandic Althing instead of the English Parliament. But the idea was the same. The local members wanted to throw a party for the voters of the hide —district. A well-knit minority led by the parasite, Darling, wanted to save the money for contribution to the national war chest.

Park waited until the question was just about to be put to a vote, then snapped his fingers for the chairman's attention. The chairman, an elderly dodderer, recognized him.

"My friends," said Park, lurching to his feet, "of course, I don't know that I really ought to say anything, being just a recent immigrant from the wilds of Dakotia. But I've always voted Diamond, and so did my father, and his father before him, and so on back as far as there *was* any Diamond Party. So I think I can claim as solid a party membership as some folks who live in New Belfast three months out of the year and spend the rest of their time upholding the monetary repute of certain honorary country thanes." Park, with satisfaction, saw Darling jerk his tomato-colored face around and heard a few snickers. "Though," he continued, "considering the healthy complexion you get from country life, I don't know but what I envy such people." More snickers. "Now it seems to me that—"

Twenty minutes later the party had been voted. Park was the chairman—since he alone seemed really anxious to assume responsibility. And Trigvy Darling, at whose expense Park had acquired a frothy popularity by his jibes, had turned from vermilion to magenta.

After the meeting, Park found himself in a group of people, including the chairman and Figgis. Figgis was saying something about that bustard, Scoglund, when his eye caught Park's. He grinned his sepulchral grin. "I know now why I thock I'd met you! You remind me of the bishop!"

"Know him?"

"I met him once. Say, Dutt"—this was to the aged chairman—"what date's set for your withdrawal?"

"Next meeting," quavered the ancient one. "Ah, here is our crown prince, heh-heh!" Darling, his face back to normal tomato color, advanced. "Do you ken Thane Park?"

"I ken him well enough," growled Darling with the look of one who has found a cockroach in his ice cream. "It seems to me, Thane Dutt, that part of a chairman's duty is to stop the use of personalities on the part of speakers."

"You can always make a point of personal privilege, heh-heh."

Darling did something in his throat that was not quite articulate speech. Figgis murmured: "He knows the boys would laugh him down if he tried it."

"Yeah?" said Darling. "We'll see about that when I'm chairman." He stalked off.

PARK WASTED no time in exploiting his new job. Knowing that Ivor MacSvensson was due back in New Belfast the next day, he went around—as Allister Park—to the law office used by the boss as a front for his activities. The boss was already in, but the outer office was jammed with favor seekers. Park, instead of preparing to spend the morning awaiting his turn, bribed the office boy to tell him when and where MacSvensson ate lunch. Then he went to the nearby public library—movies not having been invented in this world—and took his ease until one.

But Ivor MacSvensson failed to show up at the restaurant indicated, though Park stretched one tuna-fish lunch out for half an hour. Park cursed the lying office boy. Plain bribery he was hardened to, but he really became indignant when the bribee failed to deliver. So he set about it the hard way. A knick gave him the locations of the five highest-priced restaurants in the neighborhood, and in the third he found his man. He recognized him from the pictures he had studied before starting his search—a big, good-looking fellow with cold blue eyes and prematurely white hair.

Park marched right up. "Haw, Thane MacSvensson. Recall me?"

MacSvensson looked puzzled for a fraction of a second, but he said smoothly: "Sure, of course I recall you. Your name is . . . uh—"

"Allister Park, chairman of the amusement committee of the Tenth Hide," Park rattled off. "I only met you recently, just before you left."

Park found himself staring up into a furious face—and at a sudden end to the duel!

"Sure, of course. I'd know you anywhere. Let's see, Judge Vidolf, of Bridget's Beach, wire-called me this morning; wanted to know if I kenned you. Told him I'd call him back." He gripped Park's hand. "Come on, sit down. Sure, of course, any good party worker is a friend of mine. What's the Tenth Hide doing?"

Park told of the party. MacSvensson whistled. "Saturday the thirtieth? That's day after tomorrow."

"I can manage it," said Park. "Maybe you could tell me where I could pick up some sober bartenders."

"Sure, of course." Under Park's deferential prodding, the boss gave him all the information he needed. MacSvensson finished with the quick, vigorous handshake cultivated by people who have to shake thousands of hands and who don't want to develop a case of greeter's cramp. He urged Park to come around and see him again. "Especially after that fellow Darling gets the chairmanship of your committee."

Park went, grinning a little to himself. He knew just what sort of impression he had made, and could guess how the boss was reacting to it. He'd be glad to get a vigorous, aggressive worker in the organization; at the same time he'd want to keep a close watch on him to see that *his* power wasn't undermined.

Park congratulated himself on having arrived in a world where the political set-up bore a recognizable likeness to that of his own. In an absolute monarchy, for instance, he'd have a hell of a time learning the particular brand of intrigue necessary to become a king's favorite. As it was—

THE Bridget's Beach knicks stood glowering at a safe distance from the throng of picnickers. They were anti-MacSvensson, but the judges were pro, so what could they do about it if the party violated the beach ordinances? Park's fellow committeemen were by now too sodden with beer to do anything at all, so Park was dashing around, running everything himself. Everybody seemed to be having a good time—party workers, fat voters and their families, everybody but a morose knot of Darling and followers at one end.

Near this knot a group of anti-Darlings were setting up a song:

"Trig Darling, he has a foul temper;
Trig Darling's as red as can be;
Oh, nobody here loves Trig Darling,
Throw Trigvy out into the sea!
Throw—Trig,
Throw—Trig,
Throw—Trigvy out into the sea!"

Park hurried up to shush them. Things were going fine, and he didn't want a fight—yet, at any rate. But his efforts were lost in the next stanza:

"Trig Darling, he has a pot belly;
Trig Darling's as mean as can be—"

At that moment, apparently, a giant hit Allister Park over the head with a Sequoia sempervirens. He reeled a few steps, shook the tears out of his eyes, and faced Trigvy Darling, who was advancing with large fists cocked.

"Hey," said Park, "this isn't—" He brought up his own fists. But

Darling, instead of trying to hit him again, faced him for three seconds and then spat at him.

Park glanced at the drop of saliva trickling down his chest. So did everyone else. One of Darling's friends asked: "Do you make that a challenge, Trig?"

"Yes!" boomed the parasite.

Park didn't really catch on to what was coming when he was surrounded by his own party. He and Darling were pushed together until their bare chests were a foot apart. Somebody called the knicks over; these stationed themselves around the couple. Somebody else produced a long leather belt, which he fastened around the middles of both men at once, so they could not move farther apart. Darling, his red face expressionless, grabbed Park's right wrist with his left hand and held out his own right forearm, evidently expecting Park to do the same.

It was not until a big sheath knife was pressed into each man's right hand that Park knew he was in a duel. Somehow he had missed this phase of Vinland custom in his reading.

Park wondered frantically whether his mustache would come off in the struggle. One knick stepped up and said: "You know the rules: nay kicking, biting, butting, punching, or scratching. Penalty for a foul is ane free stab. Ready?"

"Yes," said Darling.

"Yes," said Park, with more confidence than he felt.

"Go," said the policeman.

PARK FELT an instant surge of his opponent's muscles. Darling had plenty of these under the fat. If he'd only had longer to train the bishop's body— Darling wrenched his wrist loose from Park's grip, threw a leg around one of Park's to trip him, and brought his fist down in a lightning overhand stab.

It was too successful. Park's leg went out from under him and he landed with a thump on his back, dragging Darling down on top of him. Darling drove his knife up to the hilt in the sand. When he jerked it up for another stab, Park miraculously caught his wrist again. A heave and Darling toppled onto the sand beside him. For seconds they strained and panted, a tangle of limbs.

Park, his heart laboring and sand in his eyes, wrenched his own knife arm free. But when he stabbed at Darling, the parasite parried with a twisting motion of his left arm and gathered Park's arm into a bone-crushing grip. Park, in agony, heaved himself to his knees, pulling Darling up, too. They faced each other on their knees, the belt still around them. Darling wrenched his knife arm loose again, whipped it around as for a backhand stab, then back for an overhand. Park, trying to follow the darting blade, felt as if something had exploded in his own left arm. Darling's point was driven into it and into the bone.

Darling tried to pull it out. It didn't yield the first pull. Park leaned forward suddenly. Trigvy Darling unwound his left arm from Park's right to catch himself as he swayed backward. Park stabbed at him. Darling blocked the stab with his forearm; Park felt as if his wrist were broken. He played his last trick: tossed up the knife, caught it the other way to, and brought it around in a quick up-and-out thrust. To his surprise, Darling failed to block it at all—the blade slid up under the parasite's ribs to the hilt. Park, warm blood running over his hand, twisted and sawed his way across Darling's abdomen—

Trigvy Darling lay on his back, mouth open and sand in his sightless eyeballs. The spectators looked in awe at the ten-inch wound. Park, feeling a bit shaken, stood while they bandaged his arm. The knicks gravely took down the vital information about the dead man, filling the last line of the blank with: "Killed in fair fight with Allister Park, 127 Isleif St., N. B."

Then people were shaking his hand and slapping his bare back and babbling congratulations at him. "Had it coming to him—" "—never liked him, anyway, only we had to take him on account of Brahtz—" "You'll make a better chairman—"

Park stole a hand to his upper lip. His mustache was still in place. It was a little loose on one side, but a quick press fixed that. He gradually became aware that the duel, so far from spoiling the party, had made a howling success of it.

LEADING a double life is a strenuous business at best. It is particularly difficult when both one's identities are fairly prominent people. But Allister Park managed it, with single-minded determination to let nothing stop his getting the person of Joseph Noggle in such a position that he could make him give his, Park's, wheel of if another half spin. It might not be too late, even if the Antonini case was washed up, to rehabilitate himself.

His next step was to cultivate Ivor MacSvensson, burg committee chairman for the Diamond Party of the Burg of New Belfast. This was easy enough, as the chairman of the hide committee was ex-officio a member of the burg committee.

They were dining in one of the small but expensive restaurants for which MacSvensson had a weakness. The burg chairman said: "We'll have to get Anlaf off, that's all there is to it. Those dim knicks should have known better than to put him in jail in the first place."

Park looked at the ceiling.

"I know, I know," said MacSvensson impatiently. "I know he's a dirty bustard. But what can I do? He's got the twenty-sixth hide in his fist, so I've got to play cards with him. Especially with the thingly election coming up in three months. It'll be close, even with Bishop Scoglund lying low the way he has been. I had a little plan for shushing the dear bishop; it didn't work, but it seems to have scared him into keeping quiet about the ricks of

the Skrellings. And the Thing meeting next month— If that damned Equalricks Amendment goes through, it'll split the party wide open."

"If it doesn't?" asked Park.

"That'll be all right."

"How about the Dakotians and the rest?"

MacSvensson shrugged. "No trouble for fifty years. They talk a lot, but I never saw a Skrelling that would stand up and fight yet. And what if they did try an invasion? New Belfast is a long way from the border, and the elections would be called off. Maybe by the time it was over, folks would get some sense."

Park had his own ideas. His researches had told him something about the unprepared state of the country. New Belfast had hundreds of miles between it and the independent Skrellings; in case of a sea attack, they could count on the friendly Northumbrian fleet, one of the world's largest, to come over and help out. So the New Belfast machine had consistently plugged for more money for harbor improvements and merchant-marine subsidies and less for military purposes. But if the Northumbrian fleet was immobilized by the threat of the navy of the Amirate of Cordova, and the Skrellings overran the hinterland of Vinland—

MacSvensson was speaking: "—you know, that youngest daughter of mine, she wants to marry a *schoolteacher*. Daftest idea. And that boy of mine has the house full of his musical friends; at least that's what he calls 'em. They'll play their flugelhorns and yell and stamp all night."

"Why not come up to my place?" asked Park with the studied nonchalance of an experienced dry-fly fisherman making a cast.

"Sure, of course. Glad to. I've got three appointments, thinging, but hell with 'em."

Ivor MacSvensson was good company, even if he did have a deplorable scale of moral values. Park, having made the necessary soundings, suggested getting some girls. The chairman's blue eyes lit up a bit; there was lechery in the old war horse yet. Park telephoned his little waitress friend. Yes, she had a friend who was just *dying* to meet some big political shots.

Many residents of New Belfast were wont to say of Ivor MacSvensson: "He may be a serpent, but at least he leads a spotless home life." MacSvensson was at pains to encourage this legend, however insubstantial its basis. These people would have been pained to see the boss an hour later, smeared with lipstick, bouncing Park's friend's friend on his knee.

"Stuffy, isn't it?" said Park, and got up to open a window. The unsuspecting MacSvensson was having too good a time to notice Park thrust his arm out the window and wag it briefly.

Five minutes later the doorbell rang. By the time MacSvensson had snapped out of his happy daze, Park had admitted a small, wrinkled man who pointed at the friend's friend and cried: "Fleda!"

"Oswald!" shrieked the girl.

"Sir," shouted Dunedin at the boss, "what have you been doing with my wife? What have you been doing with my wife?"

"Oh," sobbed Fleda, "I didn't mean to be unfaithful! Truly I didn't. If I'd only thought of you before it was too late—"

"Huh?" mumbled MacSvensson. "Too late? Unfaithful? Your wife?"

"Yes, you serpent, you scoundrel, you bustard, my wife! You'll suffer for this, Boss MacSvensson! Just wait till I—"

"Here, here, my man!" said Park, taking Dunedin by the arm and pulling him into the vestibule. For ten minutes the boss listened in sweaty apprehension to Park's and Dunedin's voices, rising and falling, the former soothing, the latter strained with rage. Finally the door slammed.

Park came back and said: "I got him to promise not to put in any slurs or tell any newspapers until we talk things over again. I know who he is, and I *think* I can squelch him through the company he works for. I'm not sure that'll work, though. He's mad as a wet hen; won't believe that this was just an innocent get-together."

The imperturbable boss looked badly shaken. "You've got to stop him, Al! The story would raise merry hell. If you can do it, you can have just about anything I can give you."

"How about the secretaryship of the burg committee?" asked Park promptly.

"Surely, of course. I can find something else for Ethelbald to do. Only keep that man shut up!"

"All right, old boy. Right now you'd better get home as soon as you can."

When MacSvensson had been gone a few minutes, Eric Dunedin's ugly face appeared in the doorway. "All clear, Hal—I mean Thane Park?"

"Come in, Monkey-face! Neat piece of work—a damn neat piece of work. You did well, too, Fleda. Both you girls did. And now"—Park drove a corkscrew into another cork—"we can have a *real* party!"

VII.

"DAMN it, Dunedin," said Park, "when I say put your breakfast down on the table and eat it, I mean it!"

"But, Hallow, it simply isn't done for a thane's thane to eat with his master—"

"To hell with what's done and what isn't. I've got more for you to do than stand around and treat me as if I were God Almighty. We've got work, brother. Now get busy on that mail."

Dunedin sighed and gave up. When Park chose to, he could by now put on what Dunedin admitted was a nearly perfect imitation of Bishop Scoglund. But unless there were somebody to be impressed thereby, he chose instead to be his profane and domineering self.

Dunedin frowned over one letter and said: "Thane Callahan wants to

know why you haven't been doing anything to push the Equal-ricks Amendment."

"Why should I? It isn't my baby. Oh, well, tell him I've been too busy, but I'll get around to it soon. That's always the stock excuse."

Dunedin whistled suddenly. "The kin of the late Trigvy Darling have filed a wergild claim of a hundred and fifty thousand crowns against you."

"What? What? Let's see that! What's that all about? Have they got the right to sue me when I killed him in self-defense?"

"Oh, but of course, Hallow. There's nay criminal penalty for killing a man in fair fight. But his heirs can claim two years' earnings from you. Didn't you know that when you accepted his challenge?"

"Good lord, no! What can I do about it?"

"Oh, deary me, glory be to Patrick! You can try to prove the claim too big, as this ane may be. I don't know, though; Darling got a big stipend from Brahtz as a parasite."

"I can always withdraw Allister Park from circulation and be just the bishop. Then let 'em try to collect!"

IT WOULD be wearisome to follow Allister Park's political activities in detail for the three weeks after his use of the badger game on MacSvensson. But lest his extraordinary rise to power seem improbable, consider that it was not until the 1920s in Park's original world that a certain Josef Vissarianovitch Djugashvili, better known as Josef Stalin, discovered what could really be done with the executive secretaryship of a political committee. So it is not too surprising that, whereas Park knew what could be done with this office, the politicians of Vinland did not. They learned.

Among other things, the secretary makes up the agenda of meetings. He put motions in "proper" form, since a motion is seldom intelligible in the form in which it is presented from the floor. He prompts the chairman—the nominal head of the organization—on parliamentary procedure. He is the executive interim officer; wherefore all appointments go through his hands, and he has custody of all records. He is ex-officio member of all committees. Since a committee seldom has any clear idea of what it wants to do or how it wants to do it, an aggressive secretary can usually run as many committees as he has time for. The chairman can't speak at meetings; the secretary can not only speak, but speak last. He gets the gavel when an appeal is made from the chair—

At least, that is how it is done in *this* world. In Vinland the rules were not quite the same, but the similarity was close enough for Park's purpose —which was still to get back to good old New York and that judgeship, if there was still any chance of getting it.

It was after the burg committee meeting on the first of June that Park faced Ivor MacSvensson in the latter's office. Park intended to start needling the boss about the body of Joseph Noggle. But MacSvensson got there first, demanding: "What's all this about your making up to the committeemen?"

"What's what?" asked Park blandly. "I've been seeing them on routine duties only."

"Yeah? Not according to what I've been told. And I've found out that that girl you had up for me wasn't married at all. Trying to put one down on the boss, eh? Well, you can go back to hide walking. You'll call a special committee meeting for Friday night. Get those notices out today without fail. That's all."

"Suits me," grinned Park. The chairman can demand special meetings, but the secretary's the man who sends out the notices.

WHEN Friday evening arrived, two thirds of the seats in the committee room in Karlsefni Hall remained empty. MacSvensson, his blue eyes glacial, fretted. Park, sending out thunderheads of smoke from the bishop's largest pipe, lolled in a chair. He looked surreptitiously at his watch. If MacSvensson were down at the far end of the hall when the hand touched sixty, Park would simply arise and say: "In the absence of the chairman, and of any other officers authorized to act as such, I, Allister Park, acting as chairman, hereby call this meeting to order—"

But MacSvensson, looking at him, divined his intention. He snatched out his own watch and dashed to the chair. He made it by one and a half seconds.

Park was not disturbed. He took his place, hearing the boss' growl: "Did you send out all those notices when I told you to, Park? There's barely a quorum here."

"Absolutely. I can't help it if they go astray in the mail." Park neglected to add that, with the proper co-operation from a postal clerk, one can sometimes make sure that certain of the notices, though duly postmarked as of the time they are received, are mislaid in the post office and overlooked until the day after the meeting.

"The meeting will please come to order," snapped MacSvensson. He did not like the look of the quorum at all; none of his tried-and-true friends were in sight except Sleepy Ethelbald.

He continued: "This is a special meeting called to consider the good and welfare of the committee. As such, there will be nay reading of the minutes. The meeting will now consider items for the agenda."

MacSvensson caught the eye of Sleepy Ethelbald, who had been primed for just this occasion. Before Ethelbald could rouse himself, another committeeman popped up with: "I move that we consider the fitness of Chairman MacSvensson to continue in his present office." "Seconded." "I move the agenda be closed." "Seconded."

MacSvensson sat for a few seconds with his mouth open. He had had revolts before—plenty of them—but never one with the devastating co-ordination and speed of this. He finally mumbled: "All in favor—"

"Aye!" roared most of the quorum.

MacSvensson ran fingers through his white hair, then squared his shoul-

ders. He wasn't licked yet. There were more tricks— "The meeting will now consider the first item on the agenda—"

"I move the impeachment of Chairman MacSvensson!" "Seconded!"

For the second time the chairman sat with his mouth open.

Park said gently: "You accept the motion and give me the gavel."

"But—" wailed MacSvensson.

"Nay buts. A motion to impeach the chairman automatically transfers the gavel to the secretary. Come on, old boy."

An hour later Ivor MacSvensson stalked out, beaten. Park could have had the chairmanship himself, but he astutely preferred to keep the secretaryship and put the ancient of days, Magnus Dutt, in that exposed position.

Mayor Offa Greenfield knew his own mind, such as it was. He banged his fist on his desk, making all his chins quiver. "Nay!" he shouted. "I don't know what you're up to, Allister Park, but by the right ear of Hallow Gall, it's something. The liberties of a free people—"

"Now, now, we're not discussing the liberties of a free people. I'm sure we agree on that subject. It's just a question of the person of Joseph Noggle—"

"I won't be dictated to! I won't take orders from anybody!"

"Except Ivor MacSvensson?"

"Except Iv— Nay! I said anybody! Go practice your serpentine trick on somebody else, Allister Park; you'll get nothing from me! I won't interfere with Borup's running of his institute. Unless, of course"—Greenfield lowered his voice to normal—"you can get MacSvensson to back you up."

Greenfield, it seemed, had the one virtue of loyalty. He intended to stick by the fallen boss to the bitter end, even though nearly all the rest of MacSvensson's stanch supporters had deserted him when the effectiveness of Park's coup had become patent.

But Greenfield was not an elected officer, as were the members of the burg thing, or city council. He was appointed by a committee of the Althing, the national legislative body. So Park, for all his local power, could not displace Greenfield at the July elections by putting up a rival candidate. He could only do it by acquiring sufficient power in the Althing. He set himself to study how to do this.

New Belfast elected twelve members to the Althing. As the city was firmly Diamond, nomination implied election. So the twelve thingmen, however much they bragged about their independence in public, were careful to obey the whims of the boss of New Belfast.

The repeated efforts of national Diamond boss, Yon Brahtz, to impose his control on the New Belfast Diamonds by planting stooges like the late Trigvy Darling in their hide committees, had aroused some resentment. Park decided that he could trust his most active supporters, and the twelve thingmen, to back him in a gigantic double cross: to desert the Diamond Party altogether and join the Rubies. The goats would be not merely Brahtz

and his squirearchy, but the local Ruby politicians of New Belfast. But as these had never accomplished anything but draw some patronage from the Althing in the periods when the Rubies were in power there, Park thought he would not find much resistance to their sacrifice on the part of the Ruby leaders. And he did not.

But twenty men seldom keep a secret long. The morning of June 9th, Park opened his paper to find the report of a defiant speech by Yon Brahtz in which he announced bluntly that "the thanes of the Cherogian March of Vinland will defend the rights they inherited from their heroic ancestors, by any means needful, and moreover, the means for such defense are ready and waiting!" Park translated this to mean that if the Scoglund Equal-rights Amendment were passed, the squirearchy would secede.

But that would mean civil war, which in turn would mean postponement of the elections. What was even more serious, the Diamond thingmen from the seceding provinces would automatically lose their seats in the Althing, giving the Rubies a clear majority. Since the Rubies would no longer need the support of Park's insurgents, they would be disinclined to make a deal with him to appoint a mayor of his choice.

Park privately thought that, while in theory he supposed he believed in the Scoglund amendment, in practice both his and the Ruby leaders' interests would be better served by dropping it for the present, despite the growls of the Dakotians and Cherogians. But the Ruby leaders were firm; the huge block of Skrelling votes they would get by enfranchising the aborigines was worth almost any risk.

As for such questions as the rights of the Skrellings as human beings, or the unfortunate Vinlanders who would be killed or haggled up in a civil war, they were not considered at all.

VIII.

Park, holed up in the Isleif Street apartment with a couple of bodyguards, answered a call from Dunedin. "Haw, Hallow? Thane Callahan is here to see you."

"Send him over. Warn him ahead of time who I—" Park remembered the guards and amended: "Warn him about everything. You know."

Lord, he thought, all this just to get hold of Noggle, still shut up in the Psychophysical Institute! Maybe it would have been simpler to organize a private army like Brahtz's and storm that fortresslike structure. A long-distance call had warned him that Brahtz had issued orders for the mobilization of the Sons of the Vikings, as he called his storm-troopers. Kedrick, the Bretwald of Vinland, had refused to mobilize the army because, he explained, such an action would be "provocative." Maybe he secretly favored the squirearchy, whose man he was; maybe he was just a pacific civilian who found the whole subject of soldiers, guns and such horrid things too repulsive to discuss; maybe he really believed what he said—

Callahan arrived with a flourish. Since MacSvensson was no longer boss of New Belfast, the sachem went openly about the city without fear of arrest and beating up by the police.

He told Park: "It would be worth my life if some of my fellow Skrellings knew I'd told you. But the Dakotians have an army secretly assembled on the bounds. If the Vinlanders start fighting among themselves the Dakotians'll jump in to grab the northwestern provinces."

Park whistled. "How about the Cherogians?"

"They're holding back, waiting to see how things are going. If the invasion seems to be succeeding, they'll try a little 'righting of the bounds' themselves."

"And what will your Skrellings do then?"

"That depends. If the Scoglund amendment is beaten tomorrow, they'll join the invaders to a man. If it goes through, I think I can hold most of them in line."

"Why do you tell me this, Callahan?"

The sachem grinned his large, disarming grin. "Twa reasons. First, the bishop and I have been friends for years, and I'll stick to his body nay matter where his soul may be. Second, I'm not fooled, as some of my Skrellings are, by talk of what fine things the Dakotians'll do for us if we help them overthrow the palefaces. The Dakotian government is even less a folkish ane than the Bretwaldate's. I know a thing or two about how they treat their ain folk. So if you'll stick to me, I'll stick to you."

PARK would have liked to appear at the opening of the Althing as Bishop Scoglund. But too many people there knew him as Allister Park. So he attended in his mustache, hair dye, and spectacles.

The atmosphere was electric. Even Park, with all his acumen, had been unable to keep up with events. The risks were huge, whichever way he threw his insurgents' votes.

He kept them shut up in a committee room with him until the last possible minute. He did not yet know himself whether he would order them to vote for or against the amendment.

The clock on the wall ticked around.

A boy came in with a message for Park. It said, in effect, that the Sons of the Vikings had received a report that the amendment had already been passed; had mobilized and seized the town of Olafsburg.

Who had sent that mistaken message and why, there was no way of finding out. But it was too late for anybody to back down. Park looked up and said, very seriously: "We're voting for the Scoglund amendment." That was all; with his well-trained cogs no more was necessary.

The bell rang; they filed out. Park took his seat in the visitors' gallery. He said nothing, but thought furiously as the session of the Althing was opened with the usual formalities. The chairman and the speaker and the

chaplain took an interminable time about their business, as if afraid to come to grips with the fearful reality awaiting their attention.

When the first motions came up a dead silence fell as Park's twelve men got up and walked over to the Rubies' side of the house. Then the Rubies let out a yell of triumph. There was no more need of stalling or delicate angling for marginal votes. Motion after motion went through with a roar. Out went the Diamond chairman and speaker, and in went Rubies in their place.

In an hour the debate had been shut off, despite howls from Diamonds and their sympathizers about "gag law" and "high-handed procedure."

The amendment came up for its first vote. It fell short of the two thirds required by eleven votes.

Park scribbled a note and had it delivered to the speaker. The speaker handed it to the chairman. Park watched the little white note of paper drift around the Ruby side of the house. Then the Ruby leader got up and solemnly moved the suspension of thingmen Adamson, Arduser, Beornwulf, Dahl, Fessenden, Gilpatrick, Holmqvist—all the thingmen from the seceding area.

Most of those named didn't wait. They got up and filed out, presumably to catch airwains for their home provinces.

The amendment passed on the second vote.

PARK looked up the Ruby leader after the Althing adjourned. He said: "I hear the Bretwald Kedrick still won't order mobilization. Talks about 'letting the erring brethren go in peace.' What's your party line on the subject?"

The Ruby leader, a thin, cool man, blew smoke through his nose. "We're going to fick. If Kedrick won't co-operate, there are ways. The same applies to *you,* Thane Park."

Park realized that events had put him in a suspect position. If he didn't want himself and his cogs to be damned as copperheads, or the Vinland equivalent, he'd have to outshout the Rubies for unity, down with the rebels, et cetera.

Well, he might as well do a good job of it.

That afternoon the guards at the Psychophysical Institute were astonished to have their sanctuary invaded by a squad of uniformed knicks, with the notorious Allister Park at their head flourishing a search warrant. The charge was violation of the fire ordinances—in a building made almost entirely of tile, glass, and reinforced concrete.

"But . . . but . . . but—" stuttered Dr. Edwy Borup. Park merely whisked out another warrant, this time for the arrest of Joseph Noggle.

"But . . . but you can't arrest ane of my patients! It's . . . uh . . . unlawful! I'll call Mayor Greenfield!"

"Go ahead," grinned Park. "But don't be surprised if you get a busy signal." He had taken the precaution of seeing that all the lines to the mayor's office would be occupied at this time.

"HELLO, Noggle," said Park.

"Haw. Who are you? I think I've met you. Let me see—"

Park produced an air pistol. "I'm Allister Park. You'll figure out where you met me soon enough, but you won't make any comments on it. I'm glad to see my figuring came out right. Can you start a man's wheel today?"

"I suppose I could— Oh, *I* know who you are now—"

"No comments, I said. You're coming along, brother, and doing just as you're told."

The next step was when Park walked arm in arm with Noggle into the imposing executive building. Park's standing as a powerful boss saw him through the guards and flunkies that guarded the Bretwald's office on the top floor.

The Bretwald looked up from his desk. "Oh, haw, Thane Park. If you're going to nag me about that mobilization order, you're wasting your time. Who's— Ee-e-e! Where am I? What's happened to me? Help! Help!"

In bounded the guards, guns ready. Park faced them sadly. "Our respected Bretwald seems to have had a mental seizure," he said.

The guards covered the two visitors and asked Kedrick what was the matter. All they could get out of Kedrick was: "Help! Get away from me! Let me out! I don't know who you're talking about. My name's not Kedrick, it's O'Shaugnessy!"

They took him away. The guards kept Park and Noggle until a message from the acting Bretwald said to let them go.

"BY THE brazen gates of hell!" cried Park. "Is *that* all we've got?"

"Yep," said the new secretary of war, a thoughtful and conscientious man for all that he was a professional politician. "Douglas was a Brahtz man; naturally he saw to it that the army was made as harmless as possible before he skipped out."

Park laughed grimly. "The secretary of war sabotages—"

"He does what?"

"Never mind. He raises hell with, if you want a more familiar expression. Raises hell with the army for the benefit of his party, with the Dakotians about to come whooping in. I suppose it oughtn't to surprise me. How many can we raise?"

"About twenty thousand in the metropolitan area, but we can arm only hawf of them properly. Most of our rapid-fire pipes and warwains have been damaged so it'll take a month to fix them."

"How about a force of Skrellings?"

The secretary shrugged. "We can raise 'em, but we can't gear them."

"Go ahead and raise 'em anyway."

"All right, if you say so. But hadn't you better have a rank? It would look better."

"All right. You make me your assistant."

"Don't you want a commission?"

"Not on your life. Your generals would go on strike, and even if they didn't, I'd be subject to military law."

THE ARMY was not an impressive one, even when its various contingents had all collected at what would have been Pittsburgh if its name hadn't been the lovely one of Guggenvik. The regulars were few and unimpressive; the militia were more, but even less prepossessing; the Skrelling levy was the most unmilitary of all. They stood around with silly grins on their brown Mongoloid faces and chattered and scratched. Park thought disgustedly: so these are the descendants of the noble red man and the heroic viking! Fifty years of peace had been a blessing to Vinland, but not an altogether unmitigated one.

The transport consisted of a vast fleet of private folkwains and goodwains—busses and trucks to you, dear reader. It had been possible to put only six warwains in the field. These were a kind of steam-driven armored car carrying a compressor and a couple of pneumatic machine guns. There was one portable liquid-air plant for charging shells and air bombs.

The backwardness of Vinland chemistry compared to its physics caused a curious situation. The only practical military explosives were a rather low-grade black powder, and a carbon-liquid oxygen mixture. The former was less satisfactory as a propellant, considering smoke, flash, and barrel fouling, than compressed air, and was less effective as a detonant than the liquid-air explosive. So its military use was largely confined to land mines. But liquid oxygen, while as powerful as trinitrotoluol, had to be manufactured on the spot, as there was no way of preventing its evaporation. Hence it was a very awkward thing to use in mobile warfare.

Park walked into the intelligence tent and asked the secretary of war: "What do you think our chances are?"

The secretary looked at him. "Against the squires, about even. Against the Dakotians, ane to five. Against both, none." He held out a handful of dispatches. These told of the success of the Sons of the Vikings in extending their hold in the southwest, which was not surprising considering that the only division of regulars in that area were natives of the region and had gone over to the rebels. More dispatches described in brief fragments the attack of a powerful and fast-moving Dakotian army west of Lake Yanktonai—Michigan. The last of these was dated 6:00 p. m., June 26th. That was the preceding day.

"What's happened since then?" asked Park.

"Don't know," said the secretary. Just then a message came in from the first division. It told little, but the date line told much. It had been sent from the City of Edgar at the south end of Lake Yanktonai.

Park looked at his map and whistled. "But an army *can't* retreat fifty miles in one day!"

"The staff can," said the secretary. "They ride."

Further speculation about the fate of the first division seemed unnecessary. The one-eyed Colonel Montrose was dictating an announcement for the press to the effect that: "Our forces have driven off severe Dakotian attacks in the Edgar area, with heavy losses to the foe. Nine Dakotian warwains were destroyed and five were captured. Other military booty included twenty-six machine pipes. Twa enemy airwains were shot down—"

Park thought, this Montrose has a good imagination, which quality seems sadly lacking in most of the officers. Maybe we can do something with him —if we're still here long enough—

The secretary pulled Park outside. "Looks as though they had us. We haven't anything to fick *with*. Not even brains. General Higgins is just an easygoing parade-ground soldier who never expected to have to shoot at anybody in his life. For that matter, neither did I. Got any ideas?"

"Still thinking, brother," said Park, studying his map. "I'm not a soldier, either, you know; just a thinger. If I could give you any help, it would be thingly."

"Well, if we can't win by fighting, thinging would seem to be the only way left."

"Maybe." Park was still looking at the map. "I begin to have an idea. Let's see Higgins."

FORTUNATELY for Park's idea, General Higgins was not merely easygoing; he was positively comatose. He sat in his tent with his blouse unbuttoned and a bottle of beer in front of him, serene in the midst of worry.

"Come in, thanes, come in," he said. "Have some beer. *Pf-f-f*. Got any ideas? Blessed if I know where to turn next. Nay artillery, nay airwains to speak of, nay real soldiers. *Pf-f-f*. Do you guess if we started fortifying New Belfast now it'd be strong enough to hold when we were pushed back there? Nobody knows anything—*pf-f-f*. I'm supposed to have a staff, but hawf of 'em have got lost or sneaked off to join the rebels. Blessed if I know what to do next."

Park thought General Higgins would make a splendid Salvation Army general. But there was no time for personalities. He sprang his plan.

"Goodness gracious!" said Higgins. "It sounds very risky. Oh, deary me. Get Colonel Callahan."

The sachem filled the tent opening when he arrived, weaving slightly. "Somebody want me?" Belatedly he remembered to salute.

Higgins barked at him: "Colonel Callahan—*pf-f-f*—do you know you have your blouse on *backward?*"

Callahan looked down. "So I have—ha-ha—sir."

"That's a very weighty matter. Very weighty. Nay, don't change it here. Undignified. You're drunk, too."

"So are—" Callahan suppressed an appalling violation of discipline just in time. "Maybe I had a little, sir."

"That's very weighty, very weighty. Just think of it. I ought to have you shot."

Callahan grinned. "What would my regiment do then?"

"Deary me. I don't know. What would they do?"

"Give you three guesses, sir. *Hic.*"

"Run away, I suppose."

"Right the first time, sir. Congratulations."

"Don't congratulate me, you fool! *Pf-f-f.* The secretary has a plan."

"A plan, really? Haw, Thane Park; I didn't see you. How do you like our army?"

Park said: "I think it's the damnest thing I ever saw in my life. It's a galloping nightmare."

"Oh, come now," said Higgins. "Some of the brave boys are a little green, but it's not as bad as all that."

A very young captain entered, gave a heel click that would have echoed if there had been anything for it to echo against, and said: "Sir, the service company, twentieth regiment, third division, has gone on strike."

"Oh, goodness gracious!" said the general. "Why?"

"Nay food, sir. The goodwains arrived empty."

"Have them all shot. Nay, shoot one out of ten to encourage the rest. Nay, wait a minute. Arrived empty, you say? Somebody stole the food to sell to the local grocers. Take a platoon and clean out all the food shops in Guggenvik. Pay them in government I O U's."

The secretary interjected: "The Althing will never pay those off, you know."

"I know they won't, ha-ha. Now let's get down to that plan of yours."

THE NAMES were all different; Allister Park gave up trying to remember those of the dozens of small towns through which they rolled. But the gently rolling stretches of southern Indiana were much the same, cut up into a checkerboard of fields with wood lots here and there, and an occasional snaky line of cottonwoods marking the course of a stream. The Vinlanders had not discovered the beauties of billboard advertising, which, to Park's mind, was something. Not having a businessman's point of view, he had no intention of introducing this charming feature of his own civilization into Vinland. The Vinlanders did have their diabolical habit of covering the landscape with smoke from faulty burners in their wains, and that was bad enough.

A rising whistle and a shattering bang from the rear made Park jump around in the seat of his wain. A mushroom of smoke and dust was rising from a hillside. The airwain that had dropped the bomb was banking slowly to turn away. The pneumatics clattered all along the column, but without visible effect. A couple of their own machines purred over and chased the bomber off.

Those steam-turbine planes were disconcertingly quiet things. On the other hand, the weight of their power plants precluded them from carrying

either a heavy bomb load or a lot of fuel, so they were far from a decisive arm. They rustled across the sky with the dignity of dowagers, seldom getting much over one hundred fifty miles an hour, and their battles had the deliberation of a duel between sailing ships of the line.

The army wound down to the sunny Ohio—they called it the Okeeyo, both derived from the same Iroquoian word—in the region where the airwains had reported the rebel army. A rebel airwain—a converted transport ship—came to look them over and was shot down. From across the river came faintly the rebel yells and the clatter of pneumatics, firing at targets far out of range. Park guessed that discipline in Brahtz's outfit was little, if any, better than in his own.

Now, if they wanted it, the stage was set for an interminable campaign of inaction. Either side could try to sneak its men across the river without being caught in the act. Or it could adopt a defensive program, contenting itself with guarding all the likely crossings. That sort of warfare would have suited General Higgins fine, minimizing as it did the chance that most of his musical-comedy army would do a lightning advance to the rear as soon as they came under fire.

It would, in fact, have been sound tactics, if they could have counted on the rebels' remaining on the south bank of the Okeeyo in that region, instead of marching east toward Guggenvik, and if the Dakotians were not likely to descend on their rear at any moment.

The secretary of war had gone back to New Belfast, leaving Park the highest-ranking civilian with Higgins' army. He had the good sense to keep out of sight as much as possible, taking into account the soldier's traditional dislike of the interfering politician.

General Etheling, commanding the rebel army, got a message asking if he would hold a parley with a civilian envoy of General Higgins' army. General Etheling, wearing a military blouse over a farmer's overalls and boots, pulled his long mustache and said, "No, if Higgins wants to parley with me he can come himself." Back came the answer: "This is a *very* high-ranking civilian; in fact, he outranks Higgins himself. Would that island in the middle of the Okeeyo do?" General Etheling pulled his mustache some more and reckoned as how it would.

So next morning General Etheling, wearing the purely ornamental battle-ax that formed part of the Vinland officer's dress uniform, presented himself on the island. As he climbed out of his rowboat he saw his opposite number's boat pull away from the far side of the little island. He advanced a way among the cottonwoods and yelled: "Haw!"

"Haw." A stocky blond man appeared.

"You all alone, thane?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'll be jiggered! You boys kin go along back; I'll holler when I need you. Now, thane, who be you?"

"I'm Bishop Ib Scoglund, general."

"What? But ain't you the wick who started the whole rumpus with all that silly talk about ricks for the Skrellings?"

The bishop sighed. "I did what I believed rick in the sight of the Lord.

The Dakotian came forward to the flag of truce, resplendent in war-bonnet.

But now a greater danger threatens us. The Dakotians are sweeping across our fair land, like the hosts of Midian of old! Surely it would be wise to sink our little bickerings in the face of this peril?"

"You say the lousy redskins is doing an invasion? Well, now, that's the first I heered of that. What proof you got?"

Park produced an assortment of papers: dispatches, a copy of the Edgar *Daily Tidings*, et cetera.

The general was at last convinced. He said: "Well, I'll be 'tarnally damned! Begging your pardon, Hallow; I forgot as how you were a preacher."

"That's all rick, my son. There are times when, even in a cleric like me, the baser passions rise, and it is all I can do to refrain from saying 'damn' myself."

"Well, now, that's rick handsome of you. But what does old Cottonhead Higgins want me to do? I got my orders, you know."

"I know, my son. But don't you see the Divine Will in these events? When we, His children, fall out and desecrate the soil of Vinland with our brothers' blood, He chastises us with the scourge of invasion. Let us unite to hurl back the heathen before it is too late! General Higgins has a plan for mutual action all worked out. If you accept it, he will prove his good faith by letting you cross the Okeeyo unopposed."

"What kind of a plan is it? I never knew Cottonhead had enough brains to plan a barn dance, not to mention a campaign."

"I couldn't give you all the details; they're in this paper. But I know they call for your army to put itself in the path of the invaders, and when you are engaged with them for our army to attack their left flank. If we lose, our brotherly quarrel will be one with Sodom and Gomorrah. If we win, it will be surely possible to settle our civil strife without further bloodshed. You will be a great man in the sick of the people, and a good one in the sick of Heaven, general."

"Well, I guess maybe as how you're rick. Give me the rest of the day to study these here plans—"

They shook hands; the general made a fumbling salute and went over to his side of the island to call his boat. Thus he did not see the bishop lazily don his mustache and spectacles.

When General Etheling's rebels crossed the river next morning they found no trace of Higgins' force except for the usual camp litter. Following directions, they set out for Edgar.

IX.

General Higgins, goaded to hurry by Allister Park, sent his army rolling northward. People in dust-colored work clothes came out to hang over fences and stare at them.

Park asked one of these, a strapping young man with some Skrelling blood, if he had heard of the invasion.

"Sure," said the man. "Reckon they won't git this fur, though. So we ain't worrying." The young man laughed loudly at the idea of volunteering. "Me go off and git shot up so some other wick can sit on his rump and git rich? Not me, thane! If the folks in Edgar get scalped, it serves 'em right for not paying us mair for our stuff."

As the army moved farther and farther toward Edgar, the expressions of the civilians grew more anxious. As they approached the Piankishaw—Wabash—River, they passed wains parked by the roads, piled with household goods. But when the army had passed, many of these reversed their flight and followed the army back north toward their homes. Park was tempted to tell some of these people what idiots they were, but that would hardly have been politic. The army had little enough self-confidence as it was.

Higgins' army spread out along the south bank of the Piankishaw. All those in the front line had, by order, stained their hands and faces brown. The genuine Skrellings were kept well back.

Park took an observation post in a tree overlooking the main river crossing. He had just settled himself when there was a great purring hum from the other side of the bridge. An enemy warwain appeared. Its ten tires screeched in unison as it stopped at the barrier on the road. Pneumatics began to pop on all sides. The forward turret swung back and forth, its gun clattering. Then a tremendous bang sent earth, bridge, and wain into the air. The wain settled into the water on its side, half out. Some men crawled out and swam for the far shore, bullets kicking up little splashes around their bobbing heads.

Up the river, Park could see a pontoon boat putting out from the west shore. It moved slowly by poling; passed out of sight. In a few minutes it reappeared, drifting downstream. It came slowly past Park and stopped against a ruined bridge abutment. Water gradually leaked through the bullet holes in the canvas, until only one corner was above water. A few arms and faces bobbed lazily just below the surface.

The firing gradually died down. Park could imagine the Dakotians scanning the position with their field glasses and planning their next move. If their reputation was not exaggerated, it would be something devastating.

He climbed down from his perch and trotted back to headquarters, where he found Rufus Callahan, sober for once.

TEN MINUTES later the two, preceded by an army piper, exposed themselves at the east end of the bridge. Park carried a white flag, and the piper squealed "parley" on his instrument. Nobody shot at them, so they picked their way across the bridge, climbing along the twisted girders. Callahan got stuck.

"I'm scared of high places," he said through his teeth, clinging to the ironwork.

Park took out his air pistol. "You'll be worse scared of me," he growled. The huge man was finally gotten under way again.

At the far end a Skrelling soldier jumped out of the bushes, rifle ready. He crackled something at them in Dakotian. Callahan answered in the same language, and the man took them in tow.

As the road curved out of sight of the river, Park began to see dozens of warwains pulled up to the side of the road. Some had their turrets open, and red men sat in them, smoking or eating sandwiches. There were other vehicles, service cars of various kinds. They stopped by one warwain. Their escort snapped to a salute that must have jarred his bones. An officer climbed out. He wore the usual mustard-colored Dakotian uniform, topped off with the feathered war bonnet of the plains Indian. There was more chattering, and Park and Callahan were motioned in.

It was crowded inside. Park burned the back of his hand against a steam pipe and cut loose with a string of curses that brought admiring grins to the red-brown faces of the crew. Everything was covered with soot.

The engineer opened the throttle, and the reciprocating engine started to chug. The car backed and filled its way around the compass. Park could not see out. They stopped presently and got out and got into another warwain, a very large one.

Inside the big machine were a number of Dakotian officers in the red-white-and-black war bonnets. A fat one with a little silver war club hanging from his belt was introduced to Park and Callahan as General Tashunkanitko, governor of the Oglala and commander in chief of the present expedition.

"Well?" snapped this person in a high-pitched, metallic voice.

Callahan gave his sloppy salute—which at first glance looked alarmingly as though he were thumbing his nose—and said: "I'm representing the commander of the Skrelling division—"

"The *what?*"

"The Skrelling division. We've been ordered by the government to put down the revolt of the Diamonds in the southwest of Vinland. They have a numerous army and are likely to conquer all Vinland if not stopped. We can't stop them, and on the other hand, we can't let them take all the south while you take all the north of Vinland.

"My commander respectfully suggests that it is hardly proper for twa armies of men of the same race to fick each other while their common enemy takes over all Vinland, as Brahtz's army will do unless we combine against it."

General Tashunkanitko crackled something to one of his men, who rattled back. The general said: "It *was* reported that your men looked like Skrellings, but we could not get close enough to be sure, and did not believe the report. What do you put up?"

Callahan continued: "My commander will not try to expel the Dakotians from the area west of the Piankishaw if you will help him against the rebels."

"Does that offer bind your government?"

"Nay. But as our army is the only really ane at present under their command, they will have nay way of enforcing their objections. To prove

our good faith we are ready, if you agree, to let you cross the Piankishaw without opposition."

The general thought for some seconds. He said: "That proposal ock to be put up to my government."

"Nay time, sir. The rebels are moving north from the Okeeyo already. Anyway, if we make a truce aside from our government, you ought to be willing to do the same. After we've overthrown the Brahtz army I'm sure we can find some workable arrangement between our armies."

Tashunkanitko thought again. "I will do it. Have you a plan of campaign worked out?"

When the Dakotians crossed the Piankishaw the next day there was no sign of the large and supposedly redskin army that had held the passage against them.

Across the rolling Indiana plain came the rattle of pneumatic rifles and the crack of air and mortar bombs. General Higgins told Park: "We just got a message from General Etheling; says he's hard pressed and it's about time we did our flank attack on the Dakotians. And this General Tush . . . Tash . . . General Crazy Horse wants to know why we haven't attacked the flank of the rebels. Says he's still pushing 'em back, but they outnumber him twa to ane and he's had a lot of mechanical breakdowns. Says if we'll hit them now they'll run. *Pf-f-f.*"

"We don't want to let either side win," said Park. "Guess it's time to start."

Park squeezed into the observation turret of the headquarters wain, the *Beowulf,* beside Higgins. They went slowly, so as not to outrun the infantry, lurching and canting as the huge rubber doughnuts that served as wheels pulled them over walls and fences. They crunched through one corner of a farmyard, and the countryside was inundated by fleeing hogs and chickens. Park had a glimpse of an overalled figure shaking a fist at the wain. He couldn't help laughing; it was too bad about the farmer's livestock, but there was something ultra-rural about the man's indignation over a minor private woe when a battle was going on next door.

Men began to appear ahead; scattered scouts dodging from tree to fence, firing at unseen targets, then frantically working the pump levers of their rifles to compress the air for the next shot. One of them was not a hundred yards away when he saw the advancing wains. He stared stupidly at them. The forward machine gunner in the *Beowulf* fired a burst that sent the gravel flying around the scout's feet. The scout jumped straight up and came down running. Others ran when they saw the wains looming out of the dust. A few who didn't see soon enough ran toward the advancing line with their hands up.

They met larger groups of redskins, crawling or running from right to left with faces set. Each time there would be one face the first to turn; then they would all turn. The group would lose its form and purpose, sublimat-

ing into its component human atoms. Some stood; some ran in almost any direction.

Then they were in a half-plowed field. The plow and the steam tractor stood deserted among the brown furrows. On the other side of the field was a hostile wain. Park felt the engine speed up as the two machines lumbered toward each other. Bullets pattered about his cupola. It gratified him to see the general wince when they struck on and around the glass.

The wains came straight at each other. Park gripped the handholds tight. The other wain stopped suddenly, backed swiftly and tried to run it at them from the side. The *Beowulf* jumped ahead with a roar. Its ram dug into the side of the other machine with a terrible crash. They backed away; Park could see lubricating oil running out of the wound in the other machine. It still crawled slowly. His own mechanical rhinoceros charged again. This time the other machine heaved up on its far wheels and fell over—

The fight went out of the Dakotians all of a sudden. They had made a terrific assault on twice their number of rebels; they had fought steadily for two days. The warwains still in commission were battered, and the infantry were exhausted with pumping up their rifles. And to have a horde of strangers roll up their flank just when victory was in sight— No wonder General Tashunkanitko and his officers, for all their traditional stoicism, let a tear or two trickle when they were rounded up.

General Etheling's rebels fared no better; rather worse, in fact. The Skrelling regiment ran wild among the rural Vinlanders they hated, doing what they had wanted to do for generations—scalp the palefaces. Having somewhat hazy ideas about that ancestral ritual, they usually made the mistake of trying to take off the whole top of a man's head instead of the neat little two-inch circle of scalp. When they started in on the prisoners they had to be restrained by a few bursts of machine-gun fire from one of Higgins' wains.

THE TRAIN back to New Belfast stopped at every crossroads so the people could come out and whoop. They cheered Allister Park well enough; they cheered Rufus Callahan; they yelled for Bishop Scoglund. The story had gone ahead, how General Higgins had devised a scheme for the entrapment of both the rebel and the Dakotian armies; how the brave bishop had talked Etheling into it; how Etheling had treacherously shot the brave bishop; how Callahan had swum the Okeeyo with Bishop Scoglund on his back— It was rumored that the city thinger—politician—Allister Park, had had something to do with these developments, but you never want to believe anything good of these thingers. Since he was assistant secretary of war, though, it was only polite to give him a cheer, too.

Park did not think it would be prudent to show himself to the same audience both as Park and as the bishop, so they were all informed that his hallowship was recuperating.

As they rolled into New Belfast, Park experienced the let-down feeling that comes at such moments. The rebellion had sputtered out. The Dakotian government had disowned General Tashunkanitko. What next? By now, Noggle would have been rescued from Park's knicks and returned to Edwy Borup's hatch. That was bound to happen anyway, which was why Park hadn't tried to use that method of getting Noggle into his power before. The whirling of the wheel of if was a delicate business, not to be interrupted by people with warrants. And he would have to see that somebody was left behind to make Noggle stop the wheel at the right time.

It ought not to be difficult now, though. If he couldn't use his present power and position to get hold of Noggle, he'd have enough after the election —which would come off as scheduled, after all. First he'd make Noggle stop poor old Kedrick's wheel. Then he'd have Callahan or somebody stand over Noggle with a gun while he spun his, Park's, wheel through another half turn. Then, maybe, Noggle would be allowed to halt his own carousel.

For the first three days after his return he was too busy to give attention to this plan. Everybody in New Belfast seemingly had written him or telephoned him or called at one of his two homes to see him. Monkey-face was a lousy secretary, but Park didn't dare hire another so long as he had his double identity to maintain.

But the Antonini trials were due in a week back in that other world. And the heirs and assigns of Trigvy Darling had had a date set for a hearing on their damage claim. And, if Park knew his history, there would probably be a "reconstruction" period in the revolted territories, of which he wanted no part.

FOR THE second time Edwy Borup had his sanctuary invaded by Allister Park and a lot of tough-looking official persons, including Rufus Callahan.

"Haw, Noggle," said Park. "Feel a little more co-operative?"

"Nay," snapped Noggle. "But since you have me by the little finger, I suppose I'll have to do what you say."

"All rick. You're honest, anyway. First you're going to stop Bretwald Kedrick's wheel. Bring him in, boys."

"But I don't dare try to stop a wheel without my notes. You know what happened last time—"

"That's all right; we brought your whole damn library over."

There was nothing to it. Noggle stared at the fidgety Bretwald—the period of whose cycle was, fortunately, just twice his, so that both were in their own bodies at the same time. Then he said: "*Whew.* Had a lot of psychic momentum, that ane; I just did stop him. He'll be all rick now. What next?"

Park told everybody but Callahan to go out. Then he explained that Noggle was to give his wheel another half turn.

"But," objected Noggle, "that'll take seven days. What's going to be done with your body in the meantime?"

"It'll be kept here, and so will you. When the half cycle's completed, you'll stop my wheel, and then we'll let you stop your own whenever you like. I've made sure that you'll stay here until you do the right thing by my wheel."

Noggle sighed. "And MacSvensson thought he'd get some simple-minded idealist like the bishop! How is it that your pattern of acting is different from his, when by the laws of luck you started out with much the same hereditary make-up?"

Park shrugged. "Probably because I've had to fight every step of the way, while he was more or less born into his job. We're not so different, at that; his excess energy went into social crusading, while mine's gone into pol—thinging. I *have* an ideal or two kicking around somewhere. I'd like to meet Bishop Scoglund sometime; think I'd like him."

"I'm afraid that's impossible," said Noggle. "Even sending you back is risky. I don't know what would happen if your body died while his mind in-dwelt it. You might land in still another possible world instead of in your ain. Or you might not land anywhere."

"I'll take a chance," said Park. "Ready?"

"Yes." Dr. Joseph Noggle stared at Park—

"Hey, Thane Park," said a voice from the doorway. "A wick named Dunedin wants to see you. Says it's weighty."

"Tell him I'm busy. No, send him in."

Monkey-face appeared, panting. "Have you gone yet? Have you changed? Glory be to Bridget! You . . . I mean his hallowship . . . what I mean is, the Althing signed a treaty with the Dakotians and Cherogians and such, setting up an International Court for the Continent of Skrelleland, and the bishop has been chosen ane of the judges! I thock you ock to know before you did anything."

"Well, well," said Park. "That's interesting, but I don't know that it changes anything."

Callahan spoke up: "I think you'd make a better judge, Allister, than *he* would. He's a fine fellow, but he will believe that everybody else is as uprick as he."

Park pondered. After all, what had he gone to all this trouble for—why had he helped turn the affairs of half the continent upside down—except to resume a career as public prosecutor which, he hoped, would some day land him on the bench? In Vinland he'd played his hand with cynical disregard of even this world's easygoing principles. And here was a judgeship handed him on a platter.

"I'll stay," he said.

"But," objected Noggle, "how about those thirteen other men on your wheel? Are you going to leave them out of their proper places?"

Park grinned. "If they're like me, they're adaptable guys who've probably got started on new careers by now. If we shift 'em all again it'll just make more trouble for them. Come along, Rufus."

THE FUNERAL of Allister Park, assistant secretary of war, brought out thousands of people. Some were politicians who had been associated with Park; some came for the ride. A few came because they liked the man.

In an anteroom of the Cathedral of Hallow Columbanus, Bishop Scoglund waited for that infernal music to end, whereupon he would go out and preach the swellest damn funeral oration New Belfast had ever heard. It isn't given to every man to conduct that touching ceremony for his own corpse, and the bishop intended to give his alter-ego a good send-off.

In a way he was sorry to bid Allister Park good-by. Allister had a good deal more in common with his natural, authentic self than did the bishop. But he couldn't keep up the two identities forever, and with the judgeship on one hand and the damage suit on the other, there wasn't much question of which of the two would have to be sacrificed. The pose of piety would probably become natural in time. The judgeship would give him an excuse for resigning his bishopric. It was lucky that the Celtic Christian Church had a liberal attitude toward churchmen who wished to leave the church. Of course, he'd still have to be careful—girl friends and such.

"What the devil— What do you wish, my son?" said the bishop, looking up into Figgis' unpleasant face.

"You know what I wish, you old goat! What are you going to do about my wife?"

"Are you Thane Figgis? Why, my friend, it seems that you have been subject to a monstrous deception!"

"You bet I—"

"Please, do not shout in the house of God! What I was saying was that the guilty person was none other than the late Allister Park, may the Lord forgive his sins. He has been impersonating me. As you know, we looked very much alike. Allister Park confessed to me on his deathbed two days ago. No doubt his excesses brock him to his untimely end. Ah, for all his human frailties, he was a man of many good qualities. But you will forgive him, will you not?"

"But . . . but I—"

"Please, for my sake. You would not speak ill of the dead, would you?"

"Oh, hell! Your pardon, bishop. I thought I had a good thing, that's all. G'-by. Sorry."

The music was coming to an end. The bishop stood up, straightened his vestments, and strode majestically out. If he could only count on that drunken nitwit Callahan not to forget himself and bust out laughing.

The coffin was, like all coffins in Vinland, shaped like a viking longboat. It was smothered in flowers. It was also full of pine boards. Some people were weeping a bit. Even Callahan, in the front row, was appropriately solemn.

"Friends, we have gathered here to pay a final tribute to one who has passed from among us—"

THE END.

THE HATERS

by DONALD A. WOLLHEIM

It was a swell idea for removing an enemy. But there was one matter to be considered—

Illustrated by F. Kramer

Council of Elders,
Village of Umbolo,
Twenty-five Miles Inland Along
Third Rivulet Branching West
Along River Congo Below
Stanleyville,
Belgian Congo, Africa.

Reverend Sirs:

Inclosed you will find my check for one hundred dollars which you will be able to exchange at any branch bank in the nearest white center. This sum is, I understand, twice the amount you usually receive for a job of this sort. I have included extra because the distance of the field of operations may require extra energy on your part.

In exchange for this sum, you will hate to death the following person:

Mr. Quentin W. Kelvin,
2574 King Charles Boulevard,
Brooklyn, New York.

He is five feet, ten inches in height; hair, brown; eyes, brown; age, forty-six years and three months. I inclose a copy of his business letterhead, a sample of his handwriting, and a postage stamp he has licked.

I trust you can give me prompt service. For reasonable speed, I will be glad to donate an additional one hundred dollars to the Negro Aid Society of Harlem, or to any other charity, or organization, you may choose to name.

Yours very truly,
Edward Mannix.

I READ the letter twice, then handed it back to Mannix.

"Are you nuts, Ed, or am I?"

He tried to throw another shot into his glass and missed. I grabbed the bottle, and put it out of his reach.

"Not yet, sonny boy. Before you preserve your liver further, you tell me what that letter is all about."

"Ben," he croaked, "I am not a violent man, am I?"

"No!" I answered him.

"This person Kelvin has been my Nemesis for years. We've been rivals ever since school days. I thought I'd done with him when graduation day came, but two years later, when I first met my wife, there he was again. And when I went into partnership with Jarvis, there was Kelvin managing a rival firm.

"Well, that's business. But after I took over, he began to get the edge. I do not particularly blame him because he thought of new angles before I did, because he managed to freeze me out over half the time."

The waiter came by just then and wiped up the mess Mannix had made. Ed grabbed his arm. "Did you call the hospital?"

"Yes, sir. We have been making

calls every fifteen minutes as you asked. And we gave them the message the first time; they understand."

"How . . . how is he?"

"The doctors say he is sinking fast, sir."

"Do they know what is wrong with him?"

"They are not sure."

Mannix turned to me with a we-are-lost-the-captain-shouted look. "There's nothing they can do."

I poured him out a thimbleful. "Here, take it. And go on with the story."

He hunched over the glass. "Kelvin was better-looking than I. It was more or less of a surprise to me when Judy turned him down and married me instead. But he wasn't satisfied to let things stand. He's been constantly trying to turn her against me, playing up my failures

and his own success. I think that is what finally made me decide to get him."

"So?"

"I had to do something. But I didn't know what. I knew, Ben, I could not get away with murder. Hate the sight of blood, and violence sickens me. Besides, I'm sure I'd give it all away no matter how airtight a defense I might be able to work out in advance. And I don't know any gangsters who might do the job for me.

"Then some time ago, I noticed a story in a Sunday supplement to the *Journal* about the witch doctors of Africa. It was more or less a general account of tribal magic, but one item in particular attracted me. It seems that one tribe there has made a study of hate. They have a method whereby men are trained from childhood in concentrating pure hate upon a single individual. So powerful was that concentration that the person selected would *rapidly fail in health and die.*"

The light began to break. "So you wrote this letter?"

"Yes. I checked up on it in the library and found that such a tribe does exist, and that the missionaries tell about people getting sick for apparently no reason at all and passing out. Permanently. Doctors have never been able to find any trace of disease in such cases, no traces of poison, injury, or deficiency in diet. The victim just begins to lose weight, to feel tired and ill, and finally to sink into a coma."

The light burst. "So that's why you're soaking in the firewater. You're afraid it won't work after all? Or are you afraid of being a murderer in case it does?"

"I'm not afraid of being sent up for killing him, no. The laws of this State do not recognize witchcraft; this letter would not stand in any court. But I haven't told you the whole story, haven't told you why I'm afraid it *is* working.

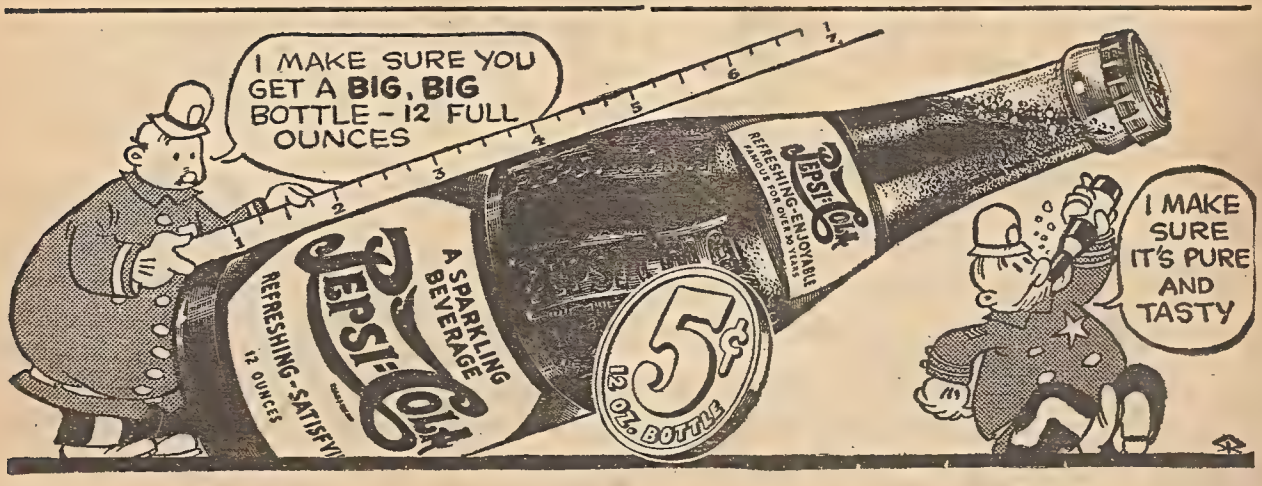
"I'm broke, Ben. Kelvin cleaned me out a month ago.

"You know what that means? It means that the check I sent to Africa is going to bounce. It'll take a couple of months before it does, because of the slowness of international banking. But when it does—"

The waiter was here again. "Mr. Mannix," he said, "the hospital just called; Mr. Kelvin died at 12:43."

"You see," groaned Mannix. "I was right. The Haters got him. What'll I do, Ben, when they find that check of mine is no good? What'll I do?"

THE END.


I MAKE SURE YOU GET A BIG, BIG BOTTLE – 12 FULL OUNCES
PEPSI-COLA
A SPARKLING BEVERAGE
REFRESHING – SATISFYI
12 OUNCES
5¢
12 OZ. BOTTLE
I MAKE SURE IT'S PURE AND TASTY

FRUIT OF KNOWLEDGE

by C. L. MOORE

The oldest story of all—a tale of the First Man, and three who intruded—from the pen of one of fantasy's most popular authors.

Illustrated by F. Kramer

It was the first Sabbath. Down the open glades of Eden a breeze stirred softly. Nothing else in sight moved except a small winged head that fluttered, yawning, across the glade and vanished among leaves that drew back to receive it. The

air quivered behind it like a wake left in water of incomparable clarity. From far away and far above a faint drift of singing echoed, "Hosannah . . . hosannah . . . hosannah—" The seraphim were singing about the Throne.

A pool at the edge of the glade gave back light and color like a great, dim jewel. It gave back reflections, too. The woman who bent over it had just discovered that. She was leaning above the water until her cloudy dark hair almost dipped into the surface. There was a curious shadow all about her, like a thin garment which did not quite conceal how lovely she was, and though no breeze stirred just now, that shadow garment moved uneasily upon her and her hair lifted a little as if upon a breeze that did not blow.

She was so quiet that a passing cherub-head paused above the water to look, too, hanging like a hummingbird motionless over its own reflection in the pool.

"Pretty!" approved the cherub in a small, piping voice. "New here, aren't you?"

The woman looked up with a slow smile, putting back the veil of her hair.

"Yes, I am," she answered softly. Her voice did not sound quite sure of itself. She had never spoken aloud before until this moment.

"You'll like the Garden," said the cherub in a slightly patronizing tone, giving his rainbow wings a shake. "Anything I can do for you? I'm not busy just now. Be glad to show you around."

"Thank you," smiled the woman, her voice sounding a little more confident. "I'll find my way."

The cherub shrugged his colored wings. "Just as you say. By the way, I suppose they warned you about the Tree?"

The woman glanced up at him rather quickly, her shadowy eyes narrowing.

"The Tree? Is there danger?"

"Oh, no. You mustn't touch it, that's all. It's the one in the middle of the Garden, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil—you can't miss it. I saw the Man looking at it yesterday for quite a while. That reminds me, have you met the Man?"

The woman bent her head so that the hair swung forward to veil her face. From behind it, in a voice that sounded as if she might be smiling, she said:

"He's waiting for me now."

"Oh?" said the cherub, impressed. "Well, you'll find him over by the orange grove east of the Tree. He's resting. It's the Day of Rest, you know." The cherub tilted an intimate eyebrow heavenward and added: "He's resting, too. Hear the singing? He made the Man only yesterday, right out of this very earth you're standing on. We were all watching. It was wonderful—Afterward, He called the man Adam, and then Adam named the animals—By the way, what's your name?"

The woman smiled down at her own veiled reflection in the water. After a moment—

"Lilith," she said.

The cherub stared, his eyes widening into two blue circles of surprise. He was speechless for an instant. Then he pursed his pink mouth to whistle softly.

"Why," he stammered, "you . . . you're the Queen of Air and Darkness!"

Smiling up at him from the corners of her eyes, the woman nodded. The cherub stared at her big-eyed for a moment longer, too overcome for speech. Then, suddenly, he beat his rainbow pinions together and

darted off through the trees without another word, the translucent air rippling in a lazy, half-visible wake behind him. Lilith looked after him with a shadowy smile on her face. He was going to warn Adam. The smile deepened. Let him.

Lilith turned for one last glance into the mirror of the pool at the strange new shape she had just put on. It was the newest thing in creation—not even God knew about it. And rather surprisingly, she thought she was going to like it. She did not feel nearly as stifled and heavy as she had expected to feel, and there was something distinctly pleasant in the softness of the breeze pouring caressingly about her body, the fragrance of springtime sweet in her nostrils, the grass under her bare feet. The Garden was beautiful with a beauty she had not realized until she saw it through human eyes. Everything she saw through them, indeed, was curiously different now. Here in this flesh all her faculties seemed refocused, as if she, who had always seen with such crystal clarity, now looked through rainbows at everything she saw. But it was a pleasant refocusing. She wished she had longer to enjoy her tenancy in this five-sensed flesh she shared with Adam.

But she had very little time. She glanced up toward the bright, unchanging glory above the trees as if she could pierce the floor of heaven and see God resting on the unimaginable splendor of the Throne while the seraphim chanted in long, shining rows about him. At any moment he might stir and lean forward over Eden, looking down. Lilith instinctively shrugged her shadowy garment closer about her. If he did not look too closely, he might not pierce that shadow. But if he did— A little thrill of excitement, like forked lightning, went through the strange new flesh she wore. She liked danger.

She bent over the pool for one last look at herself, and the pool was a great, dim eye looking back at her, almost sentient, almost aware of her. This was a living Garden. The translucent air quivered with a rhythmic pulsing through the trees; the ground was resilient under her feet; vines drew back to let her pass beneath them. Lilith, turning away through the swimming air after the cherub, puzzled a little as she walked through the parting trees. The relation was very close between flesh and earth—perhaps her body was so responsive to the beauty of the Garden because it aped so closely flesh that had been a part of the Garden yesterday. And if even she felt that kinship, what must Adam feel, who was himself earth only yesterday?

The Garden was like a vast, half-sentient entity all around her, pulsing subtly with the pulse of the lucent air. Had God drawn from this immense and throbbing fecundity all the life which peopled Eden? Was Adam merely an extension of it, a focus and intensification of the same life which pulsed through the Garden? Creation was too new; she could only guess.

She thought, too, of the Tree of Knowledge as she walked smoothly through the trees. That Tree, tempting and forbidden. Why? Was God testing Man somehow? Was Man then, not quite finished, after all? Was there any flaw in Eden? Suddenly she knew that there must be. Her very presence here was proof of it, for she, above all others, had no right to intrude into this magical closed sphere which was God's greatest work. Yet here she walked through the heart of it, and not even God knew, yet—

Lilith slanted a smile up through the leaves toward the choruses of the seraphim whose singing swelled and sank and swelled again, unutterably sweet high above the trees. The animals watched her pass with wide, bewildered eyes, somehow not quite at ease, although no such thing as fear had yet stirred through the Garden. Lilith glanced at them curiously as she passed. They were pretty things. She liked Eden.

Presently a swooning fragrance came drifting to her through the trees, almost too sweet to enjoy, and she heard a small voice piping excitedly: "Lilith . . . Air and Darkness— He won't like it! Michael ought to know—"

Lilith smiled and stepped clear of the trees into the full, soft glow of Eden's sun. It did not touch the shadow that dimly veiled the pale contours of this newest shape in Eden. Once or twice that intangible breeze lifted her hair in a great, dim cloud about her, though no leaves moved. She stood quiet, staring across the glade, and as she stared she felt the first small tremor of distrust in this new flesh she wore.

For on a grassy bank in the sunlight, under the blossoming orange trees, lay Adam. And the trees and the flowers of Eden had seemed beautiful to the eyes of this body Lilith wore, and the breezes and the perfumes had delighted it—but here was flawless perfection newly shaped out of the warm red earth of Eden into the image of its Maker, and the sight of him frightened Lilith because it pleased her so. She did not trust a beauty that brought her to a standstill under the trees, not quite certain why she had stopped.

He sprawled in long-limbed magnificence on the grass, laughing up at the cherub with his curly yellow head thrown back. Every line of him and every motion had a splendid male beauty as perfect as Omnipotence could make it. Though he wore no clothing he was no more naked than she, for there was a curious glow all about him, a garment of subtle glory that clothed him as if with an all-enveloping halo.

The cherub danced excitedly up and down in the air above him, shrilling:

"She shouldn't be here! You know she shouldn't! She's evil, that's what she is! God won't like it! She—" Then above Adam's head he caught Lilith's eye, gulped a time or two, piped one last admonishing, "Better watch out!" and fluttered away among the leaves, looking back over one wing as he flew.

Adam's gaze followed the cherub's. The laughter faded from his face and he got up slowly, the long, smooth muscles sliding beautifully under his garment of subtle glory as he moved. He was utter perfection in everything he did, flawless, new-made at the hands of God. He came toward her slowly, a shining wonder on his face.

Lilith stared at him distrustfully. The other glories of the Garden had pleased her abstractly, in a way that left her mistress of herself. But here was something she did not understand at all. The eternal Lilith looked out, bewildered, through the eyes of a body that found something strange and wonderful in Adam. She laid a hand on the upper part of that body which rose and fell with her breathing, and felt something beating strongly beneath the smooth, curved surface of the stuff called flesh.

Adam came toward her slowly. They met in the middle of the glade, and for a long moment neither spoke.

Then Adam said in a marveling voice, resonant and deep:

"You . . . you're just as I knew you'd be— I knew you'd be somewhere, if I could only find you. Where were you hiding?"

With an effort Lilith mastered this odd, swimming warmth in her which she did not understand. After all, he was nothing but a certain limited awareness housed in newly shaped flesh, and it made no real difference at all what shape that flesh wore. Her business was too dangerous for her to linger here admiring him because by some accident he was pleasing to the eyes of her newly acquired body. She made her voice like honey in her throat and looked up at him under her lashes, crooning:

"I wasn't here at all, until you thought of me."

"Until I—" Adam's golden brows met.

"God made you in His image," said Lilith, fluttering the lashes. "There's so much of God in you still—didn't you know you could create, too, if you desired strongly enough?"

She remembered that deep need of his pulsing out and out in great, demanding waves from the Garden, and how it had seemed a call addressed to her alone. She had delighted as she yielded to it, deliberately subordinating her will to the will of the unseen caller in the Garden. She had let it draw her down out of the swimming void, let it mold flesh around her in the shape it chose, until all her being was incased in the strange, soft, yielding substance which was proving so treacherously responsive to the things she was encountering in Eden.

Adam shook his curly head uncomprehendingly. "You weren't here. I couldn't find you," he repeated, as if he had not heard her. "I watched all day among the animals, and they were all in twos but Man. I knew you must be somewhere. I knew just how you'd look. I thought I'd call you Eve when I found you—Eve, the Mother of All Living. Do you like it?"

"It's a good name," murmured Lilith, coming nearer to him, "but not for me. I'm Lilith, who came out of the dark because you needed me." She smiled a heady smile at him, and the shadowy garment drew thin across her shoulders as she lifted her arms. Adam seemed a little uncertain about what to do with his own arms as she clasped her hands behind his neck and tiptoed a little, lifting her face.

"Lilith?" he echoed in a bemused voice. "I like the sound. What does it mean?"

"Never mind," she crooned in her sweetest voice. "I came because you wanted me." And then, in a murmur: "Bend your head, Adam. I want to show you something—"

It was the first kiss in Eden. When it was over, Lilith opened her eyes and looked up at Adam aghast, so deeply moved by the pleasantness of that kiss that she could scarcely remember the purpose that had prompted it. Adam blinked dizzily down at her. He had found what to do with his arms. He stammered, still in that bemused voice:

"Thank God, you did come! I wish He could have sent you sooner. We—"

Lilith recovered herself enough to murmur gently: "Don't you understand, dear? God didn't send me. It was you, yourself, waiting and wanting me, that let me take shape out of . . . never mind . . . and come to you in the body you pictured for me, because I knew what wonderful things we could accomplish here in Eden, together. You're

God's own image, and you have greater powers than you know, Adam." The tremendous idea that had come to her in the ether when she first heard his soundless call glowed in her voice. "There's no limit to what we could do here, together! Greater things than even God ever dreamed—"

"You're so pretty," interrupted Adam, smiling down at her with his disarming, empty smile. "I'm so glad you came—"

Lilith let the rest of her eagerness run out in a long sigh. It was no use trying to talk to him now. He was too new. Powerful with a godlike power, yes, but unaware of it—unaware even of himself as an individual being. He had not tasted the Fruit of Knowledge and his innocence was as flawless as his beauty. Nothing was in his mind, or could be, that God had not put there at his shaping from the warm earth of Eden.

And perhaps it was best, after all. Adam was too close to godhood to see eye to eye with her in all she might want to do. If he never tasted knowledge, then he would ask no questions—and so he must never touch the Tree.

The Tree— It reminded her that Eden was still a testing ground, not a finished creation. She thought she knew now what the flaw in man had been which made it possible for Lilith, of all the creatures of ether, to stand here at the very focus of all the power and beauty and innocence in Eden. Lilith, who was evil incarnate and knew it very well. God had made Adam incomplete, and not, perhaps, realized the flaw. And out of Adam's need Adam himself had created woman—who was not complete either. Lilith realized it suddenly, and began to understand the depth of her reaction to this magnificent creature who still held her in his arms.

There was an idea somewhere back of all this which was immensely important, but her mind would not pursue it. Her mind kept sliding off the question to dwell cloudily on the Man upon whose shoulder she was leaning. What curious stuff this flesh was! While she wore it, not even the absorbing question of God's purpose, not even her own peril here, could quite obliterate the knowledge of Adam's presence, his arm about her. Values had changed in a frightening way, and the most frightening thing of all was that she did not care. She laid her head back on his shoulder and inhaled the honeyed perfume of the orange blossoms, futilely reminding herself that she was dangerously wasting time. At any moment God might look down and see her, and there was so much to be done before that happened. She must master this delicious fogging of the senses whenever Adam's arm tightened about her. The Garden must be fortified, and she must begin now.

Sighing, she laced her fingers through Adam's and crooned in the softest voice:

"I want to see the Garden. Won't you show it to me?"

His voice was warm as he answered:

"I want to! I hoped you'd ask me that. It's such a wonderful place."

A cherub fluttered across the valley as they strolled eastward, and paused on beating wings to frown down at them.

"Wait till *He* looks down," he piped. "Just wait, that's all!" Adam laughed, and the cherub clucked disapprovingly and fluttered off, shaking his head.

Lilith, leaning on Adam's shoul-

der, laughed, too. She was glad that he could not understand the cherub's warnings, deaf in the perfection of his innocence. So long as she could prevent it he would never taste that Fruit. The knowledge of evil was not in him and it must never be. For she was herself, as she realized well, the essence of abstract evil as opposed to abstract good—balancing it, making it possible. Her part was as necessary as God's in the scheme of creation, for light cannot exist without dark, nor positive without negative, nor good without evil.

Yet she did not feel in the least evil just now. There was no antagonism at all between her negation and the strong positive innocence of the man beside her.

"Look," said Adam, sweeping a long-armed gesture. A low hillside lay before them, starry with flowers except for a scar in its side where the raw, bare earth of Eden showed through. The scar was already healing over with a faint mist of green. "That's where I was made," said Adam softly. "Right out of that hillside. Does it seem rather . . . rather wonderful to you, Lilith?"

"If it does to you," she crooned, and meant it. "Why?"

"The animals don't seem to understand. I hoped you would. It's as if the . . . the whole Garden were part of me. If there are other men, do you suppose they'll love the earth like this, Lilith, for its own sake? Do you think they'll have this same feeling about the place where they were born? Will one certain hill or valley be almost one flesh with theirs, so that they'd sicken away from it and fight and die if they had to, to keep it—as I think I would? Do you feel it, too?"

The air went pulsing past them, sweet with the music of the seraphim, while Lilith looked out over the valley that had brought Adam to birth. She was trying hard, but she could not quite grasp that passionate identification with the earth of Eden which beat like blood through Adam's veins.

"Eden *is* you," she murmured. "I can understand that. You mustn't ever leave it."

"Leave it?" laughed Adam. "Where else is there? Eden belongs to us forever—and you belong to me."

Lilith let herself relax delightfully against his shoulder, knowing suddenly that she loved this irresponsible, dangerous flesh even while she distrusted it. And—

Something was wrong. The sudden awareness of it chilled her and she glanced uneasily about, but it was several minutes before her flesh-bound senses located the wrongness. Then she put her head back and stared up through the trees with puckered brows.

"What is it?" Adam smiled down at her. "Angels? They go over quite often, you know."

Lilith did not answer. She was listening hard. Until now all Eden had echoed faintly and sweetly with the chanting of seraphim about the Throne. But now the sounds that softed down through the bright, translucent air were not carols of praise. There was trouble in heaven. She could hear faraway shouts in great, ringing, golden voices from infinitely high above, the clash and hiss of flaming swords, and now and again a crash as if part of the very walls of heaven had crumbled inward under some unimaginable onslaught.

It was hard to believe—but there was war in heaven.

A wave of relief went delightfully through Lilith. Good—let them

"God won't like this," the cherub scolded.

fight. She smiled to herself and snuggled closer to Adam's side. The trouble, whatever it might be, would keep God's attention distracted a while longer from what went on in Eden, and she was devoutly grateful for that. She needed this respite. She had awhile longer, then, to accustom herself to the vagaries of this strange body, and to the strange reaction Adam was causing, before the war was over in heaven and war began in Eden between Lilith and God.

A shudder of terror and anticipation went over her again as she thought of that. She was not sure God could destroy her if He would, for she was a creature of the darkness beyond His light and her existence was necessary to the structure he was rearing in heaven and upon earth. Without the existence of such as Lilith, the balance of creation might tip over. No, God would not—perhaps could not—destroy her, but He could punish very terribly.

This flesh, for instance. It was so soft, so perishable. She was aware of a definite cleavage between the mind and the body that housed it. Perhaps God had been wise in choosing this fragile container instead of some imperishable substance into which to pour all the innocence, the power that was Adam. It was dangerous to trust such power in an independent body—as Lilith meant to prove to God if her plan went well. But it was no part of that plan—now—to have an angered God destroy His fleshly image.

She must think of some way to prevent it. Presently she would waken out of this warm, delightful fog that persisted so long as Adam's arm was about her, but there was no hurry yet. Not while war raged in heaven. She had never known a mood like this before, when cloudy emotions moved like smoke through her mind and nothing in creation had real significance except this magnificent male upon whose shoulder she leaned.

Then Adam looked down at her and smiled, and all the noises of war above blanked out as if they had never been. The Garden, half sentient, stirred uneasily from grass roots to treetops in response to those ringing battle shouts from above; but the Man and the woman did not even hear.

Time was nothing. Imperceptibly it passed, and presently a soft green twilight deepened over Eden. Adam and Lilith paused after a while on a mossy bank above a stream that tinkled over stones. Sitting with her head on Adam's shoulder and listening to the sound of the water, Lilith remembered how lightly life was rooted in this flesh of theirs.

"Adam," she murmured, "awhile ago you mentioned dying. Do you know about death?"

"Death?" said Adam comfortably. "I don't remember. I think I never heard of it."

"I hope," she said, "that you never will. It would mean leaving, Eden, you know."

His arm went rigid around her. "I couldn't! I wouldn't!"

"You're not immortal, dear. It could happen, unless—"

"Unless what? Tell me!"

"If there were a Tree of Life," she said slowly, measuring her words, "a Tree whose fruit would give you immortality as the fruit of that other Tree would give you knowledge, then I think not even God could drive you out of Eden."

"A Tree of Life—" he echoed softly. "What would it be like?"

Lilith closed her eyes. "A dark Tree, I think," she answered, almost in a whisper. "Dark limbs, dark leaves—pale, shining fruit hanging among them like lanterns. Can't you see it?"

Adam was silent. She glanced up at him. His eyes were shut and a look of intense longing was on his face in the twilight. There was silence about them for a long while. Presently she felt the tenseness of his body slacken beside her. He breathed out in a long sigh.

"I think there is a Tree of Life,"

he said. "I think it's in the center of the Garden near the other Tree. I'm sure it's there. The fruit are pale, just as you thought. They send out a light like moonlight in the dark. Tomorrow we'll taste them."

And Lilith relaxed against his shoulder with a sigh of her own. Tomorrow he would be immortal, like herself. She listened anxiously, and still heard the faraway battle cries of the seraphim echoing through the sky. War in heaven and peace on earth—

Through the deepening twilight of Eden no sound came except the music of the water and, somewhere off through the trees, a crooning lullaby in a tiny, piping voice as some cherub sang himself to sleep. Somewhere nearer other small voices squabbled drowsily a while, then fell silent. The most delightful lassitude was stealing over Lilith's body. She turned her cheek against Adam's shoulder and felt that cloudy fogging of the senses which she was coming to know so well—close like water above her head.

And the evening and the morning were the eighth day.

Lilith woke first. Birds were singing gloriously, and as she lay there on Adam's shoulder a cherub flashed across the stream on dazzling wings, caroling at the top of his piping voice. He did not see them. The pleasant delirium of a spring morning filled the whole wakening Garden, and Lilith sat up with a smile. Adam scarcely stirred. Lilith looked down at him with a glow of tenderness that alarmed her. She was coming to identify herself with Adam, as Adam was one with the Garden—this flesh was a treacherous thing.

Suddenly, blindingly, she knew that. Terror of what it was doing to the entity which was Lilith rolled over her in a great wave, and without thinking, almost without realizing what she did, she sprang up and out of the flesh that was betraying her. Up, up through the crystal morning she sprang, impalpable as the air around her. Up and up until the Adam that flesh had valued too highly was invisible, and the very treetops that hid him were a feathery green blur and she could see the walls that closed the Garden in, the rivers running out of it like four great blades of silver in the morning sun.

Besides the sleeping Adam nothing was left but the faintest blur of a woman shape, wrapped in shadow that made it almost invisible against the moss. The eye could scarcely have made it out there under the trees.

Lilith swam delightfully through the bright, still emptiness of the early morning. From here she could hear quite clearly the strong hosannahs of the seraphim pouring out in mighty golden choruses over the jasper walls. Whatever trouble had raged in heaven yesterday, today it was resolved. She scarcely troubled her mind about it.

She was free—free of the flesh and the terrifying weakness that had gone with it. She could see clearly now, no longer deluded by the distortions of value that had made life in that flesh so confusing. Her thoughts were not colored by it any more. Adam was nothing but a superb vessel now, brimmed with the power of God. Her perspective had been too warped down there in Eden to realize how little that magnificent body of his mattered in comparison to the power inherent in it.

She let the cold, clear ether bathe her of illusions while the timeless time of the void swam motionless around her. She had been in greater

danger than she knew; it had taken this morning dip in the luminous heights to cleanse her mind of Adam. Refreshed, fortified against that perilous weakness, she could return now and take up her mission again. And she must do it quickly, before God noticed her. *Or was he watching already?*

She swooped luxuriantly in a long, airy curve and plummeted toward Eden.

Adam still slept timelessly upon the moss. Lilith dropped closer, shrugging herself together in anticipation of entering and filling out into life the body she had thrown off. And then—then a shock like the shock of lightning jolted her in mid-air until the Garden reeled beneath her. For where she had left only the faint, ephemeral husk of a woman beside Adam, a woman of firm, pale flesh lay now, asleep on the Man's shoulder. Golden hair spilled in a long skein across the moss, and the woman's head moved a little to the rhythm of Adam's breathing.

Lilith recovered herself and hovered nearer, incandescent with such jealousy and rage as she had never dreamed could touch her. The woman was clothed in a softly glowing halo as Adam was clothed. But it was Lilith's own shape she wore beneath that halo.

A sick dismay shook Lilith bodilessly in the air. God *had* been watching, then—waiting, perhaps, to strike. He had been here—it might have been no longer than a moment ago. She knew it by the very silence of the place. Everything was still hushed and awed by the recent Presence. God had passed by, and God had seen that tenantless garment of flesh she had cast off to swim in the ether, and God had known her whole scheme in one flash of His all-seeing eye.

He had taken the flesh she had worn, then, and used it for His own purposes—her precious, responsive flesh that had glowed at the touch of Adam's hand belonged now to another woman, slept in her place on Adam's shoulder. Lilith shook with intolerable emotion at the thought of it. She would not—

Adam was waking. Lilith hovered closer, watching jealously as he yawned, blinked, smiled, turned his curly head to look down at the woman beside him. Then he sat up so abruptly that the golden creature at his side cried out in a sweet, high voice and opened eyes bluer than a cherub's to stare at him reproachfully. Lilith, hating her, still saw that she had beauty of a sort comparable to Adam's, exquisite, brimming with the glorious emptiness of utter innocence. There was a roundness and an appealing softness to her that was new in Eden, but the shape she wore was Lilith's and none other.

Adam stared down at her in amazement.

"L-Lilith—" he stammered. "Who are you? Where's Lilith? I—"

"Who is Lilith?" demanded the golden girl in a soft, hurt voice, sitting up and pushing the glowing hair back with both hands in a lovely, smooth gesture. "I don't know. I can't remember—" She let the words die and stared about the Garden with a blue gaze luminous with wonder. Then the eyes came back to Adam and she smiled very sweetly.

Adam had put a hand to his side, a pucker of the first pain in Eden drawing his golden brows together. For no reason at all he was remembering the scarred bank from which the earth that shaped him had been

taken. He opened his mouth to speak.

And then out of the glow of the morning a vast, bodiless Voice spoke quietly.

"I have taken a rib from your side, Man," said the Voice. The whole glade trembled at the sound; the brook ceased its tinkling, the leaves stood still upon the trees. Not a bird sang. Filling the whole morning, the whole Garden, the Voice went on: "Out of the flesh of your flesh I have made a helpmate and a wife for you. Forsaking all others, cleave unto her. *Forsaking all others—*"

The Voice ceased not suddenly, but by echoing degrees that made the leaves shiver upon the trees in rhythm to Its fading syllables, "Forsaking all others . . . all others . . . all others—"

And then it was as if a light ceased to glow in the Garden which, until it went out, no one had perceived. The air dimmed a little, and thickened and dulled, so that one blinked in the aftermath when the presence of God was withdrawn.

The woman drew closer to Adam's side, putting out uncertain hands to him, frightened by the quiet, tremendous Voice and the silence of the Garden. Adam dropped an arm automatically about her, stilling her fright against his shoulder. He bent his curly head as the Voice ceased to echo through the shaken air.

"Yes, Lord," he said obediently. There was an instant more of silence everywhere. Then timidly the brook sent a tentative ripple of sound into the air, a bird piped once, a breeze began to blow. God had withdrawn.

Bodiless, trembling with emotions she had no name for, Lilith watched the Man and the woman alone on the moss bank she had shared last night with Adam. He looked down at the frightened girl huddling against him.

"I suppose you're Eve," he said, a certain gentleness in his voice that made Lilith writhe.

"If you say so," murmured the girl, glancing up at him under a flutter of lashes. Lilith hated him. Over her fair head Adam looked out across the quiet glade.

"Lilith?" he said. "Lilith—"

A warm rush of answer focused all Lilith's being into one responding cry.

"Yes, Adam . . . yes! I'm here!"

He might have heard her bodiless reply, it was so passionate an answer to his call, but at that instant Eve said with childish petulance:

"Who is this Lilith, Adam? Why do you keep calling her? Won't I do?"

Adam looked down uncertainly. While he hesitated, Eve deliberately snuggled against him with a warm little wriggle that was Lilith's alone. By that, if by no other sign, Lilith knew it was her very flesh God had taken to mold this pale girl from Adam's rib, using the same pattern which Adam had designed for Lilith. Eve wore it now, and in that shape knew, without learning them, all the subtle tricks that Lilith's age-old wisdom had evolved during the brief while she dwelt in the body. Lilith's lost flesh, Lilith's delightful use of it, Lilith's Adam—all were Eve's now.

Fury and wild despair and an intolerable ache that made the world turn black around her blinded Lilith to the two beneath the tree. She could not bear to watch them any longer. With a soundless wail of despair she turned and flung herself up again into the limitless heights above Eden.

But this time the ether was no

anodyne for her grief. It had been no true anodyne before, she knew now. For a disease was upon her that had its seed, perhaps, in the flesh she wore briefly—but too long. God had made Adam incomplete, and Adam to assuage his need had flung out a net to trap some unwary creature for his own. Shame burned in her. The Queen of Air and Darkness, like some mindless elemental, had fallen into his trap; he had used her as she had meant to use him. She was a part of him now, trapped in the flesh that was incomplete without him, and her need for him was so deep that she could not escape now, even though that body was no longer hers. The roots of her disease had been in the flesh, but the virulence had spread into the very essence of the being which was Lilith and no bath in the deeps of space could cleanse her now. In the flesh or out of it, on earth or in ether, an insatiable need was upon her that could never be slaked.

And a dreadful suspicion was taking shape in her mind. Adam in his innocence could never have planned this. Had God known, all along? Had it been no error, after all, that Adam was created incomplete? And was this a punishment designed by God for tampering with his plan? Suddenly she thought that it must be. There would be no awe-inspiring struggle between light and dark such as she had half expected when God recognized her presence. There would be no struggle at all. She was vanquished, judged and punished all at a blow. No glory was in it, only this unbearable longing, a spiritual hunger more insatiable than any hunger the flesh could feel for the man she would never have again. She clove the airy heights above Eden for what might have been a thousand years, or a moment, had time existed in the void, knowing only that Adam was lost to her forever.

Forever? She writhed around in mid-ether, checking the wild, aimless upward flight. Forever? Adam still looked out across the Garden and called her name, even while he held that pale usurper in his arms. Perhaps God had not realized the strength of the strange unity between the man and the first woman in Eden. Perhaps God had not thought that she would fight. Perhaps there was a chance left, after all—

Downward through the luminous gulfs she plunged, down and down until Eden expanded like a bubble beneath her and the strong choruses of the seraphim were sweet again above the Garden. Adam and Eve were still beside the brook where she had left them. Eve on a rock was splashing her small feet and flashing blue-eyed glances over her shoulder that made Adam smile when he met them. Lilith hated her.

"Adam!" squealed Eve as the plunging Lilith came into hearing. "Look out—I'm slipping! Catch me! Quick!" It was the same croon Lilith had put into the throat of the body she had lost. Remembering how roundly and softly it had come swelling up in her throat, she writhed with a vitriolic helplessness that made the Garden dance in waves like heat around her.

"Catch me!" cried Eve again in the most appealing voice in the world. Adam sprang to clasp her as she slid. She threw both pale arms about his neck and crowed with laughter so infectious that two passing cherubs paused in midair to rock with answering mirth and beat each other over the shoulders with their wings.

"*Adam . . . Adam . . . Adam—*" wailed Lilith voicelessly. It was a

silent wail, but all her heartbreak and despair and intolerable longing went into it, and above Eve's golden head Adam looked up, the laughter dying on his face. "*Adam!*" cried Lilith again. And this time he heard.

But he did not answer directly. Association with women was beginning to teach him tact. Instead he beckoned to the reeling cherubs. Rosy with mirth, they fluttered nearer. Eve looked up in big-eyed surprise as the plump little heads balanced on rainbow wings swooped laughing toward her and poised to await Adam's pleasure.

"These are a couple of our cherubs," said Adam. "Dan and Bethuel, from over toward the Tree. They have a nest there. Tell her about the Tree, will you, boys? Eve dear, I'll be getting you some fruit for breakfast. Wait for me here."

She obeyed with only a wistful glance after him as the cherubs burst into eager chatter, squabbling a little as they spoke.

"Well, there's this Tree in the middle of the Garden—"

"Tell her about the Fruit, Dan. You mustn't—"

"Yes, you mustn't touch—"

"No, that's not right, Dan. Michael says you can touch it, you just can't eat—"

"Don't interrupt me! Now it's like this. You see, there's a Tree—"

ADAM went slowly off down to the brook. A lie had never yet been spoken in Eden. He was hunting fruit. But Lilith saw him searching the dappled spaces between the trees, too, a certain wistfulness on his face, and she came down with a rustle of invisibility through the leaves.

"Adam . . . Adam!"

"Lilith! Where are you?"

With a tremendous effort Lilith focused her whole being into an intensity so strong that although she remained bodiless, voiceless, intangible, yet the strength of her desire was enough to make Adam hear her dimly, see her remotely in a wavering outline against the leaves, in the shape he had created for her. She held it with difficulty, shimmering before his eyes.

"Lilith!" he cried, and reached her in two long strides, putting out his arms. She leaned into them. But the muscular, light-sheathed arms closed about her and through her and met in empty air.

She called his name miserably, quivering against him through all her bodiless body. But she could feel him no more than he could touch her, and the old ache she had known in mid-ether came back with a rush. Even here in his arms, then, she was forbidden to touch the Man. She could never be more than a wraith of the air to him, while Eve—while Eve, in her stolen body—

"Adam!" cried Lilith again. "You were mine first! Can you hear me? Adam, you could bring me back if you tried! You did it once—you could again. Try, try!"

He stared down at her dim face, the flowers on the hillside beyond visible through it.

"What's wrong, Lilith? I can hardly see you!"

"You wanted me once badly enough to bring me out of nowhere into the flesh," she cried desperately. "Adam, Adam—want me again!"

He stared down at her. "I do," he said, his voice unexpectedly shaken. And then, more strongly, "Come back, Lilith! What's happened to you? Come back!"

Lilith closed her eyes, feeling reality pour marvelously along her bodiless limbs. Faintly now she could feel grass underfoot, Adam's chest against her anxious hands; his

arms were around her and in his embrace she was taking shape out of nothingness, summoned into flesh again by the godhood in this image of God. And then—

"Adam . . . Adam!" Eve's sweet, clear voice rang lightly among the leaves. "Adam, where are you? I want to go look at the Tree, Adam. Where are you, dear?"

"Hurry!" urged Lilith desperately, beating her half-tangible hands against his chest.

Adam's arms loosed a little about her. He glanced across his shoulder, his handsome, empty face clouded. He was remembering.

"*Forsaking all others—*" he murmured, in a voice not entirely his own. Lilith shuddered a little against him, recognizing the timbre of that Voice which had spoken in the silence. "*Forsaking all others—*" God had said that. "Forsaking all others but Eve—"

His arms dropped from about Lilith. "I . . . I'll . . . will you wait for me?" he said hesitantly, stepping back from her half-real shape, lovely and shadow-veiled under the shadow of the trees. "I'll be back—"

"Adam!" called Eve again, nearer and very sweetly. "Adam, I'm lost! Adam! Adam, where are you?"

"Coming," said Adam. He looked once more at Lilith, a long look. Then he turned and ran lightly off through trees that parted to receive him, the glow of his half-divinity shining upon the leaves as he passed. Lilith watched the beautiful, light-glowing figure as far as she could see it.

Then she put her half-real hands to her face and her knees loosened beneath her and she doubled down in a heap upon the grass, her shadowy hair billowing out around her on a breeze that blew from nowhere, not touching the leaves. She was half-flesh now. She had tears. She found a certain relief in the discovery that she could weep.

THE NEXT sound she heard—it seemed a long while after—was a faint hiss. Cloaked in the tented shadow of her hair, she considered it a while, hiccupping now and then with receding sobs. Presently she looked up. Then she gasped and got to her feet with the effortless ease of the half-material.

The serpent looked at her sidewise out of slanted eyes, grinning. In the green gloom under the trees he was so handsome that even she, who had seen Adam, was aware of a little thrill of admiration. In those days the serpent went upright like a man, nor was he exactly non-human in shape, but his beauty was as different from man's as day is from night. He was lithe and gorgeously scaled and by any standards a supremely handsome, supremely male creature.

All about him in shadowy outline a radiance stood out that was vaguely an angel shape, winged, tremendous. It invested the serpent body with a glow that was not its own. Out of that celestial radiance the serpent said in a cool voice:

"The Queen of Air and Darkness! I didn't expect you here. What are you doing in that body?"

Lilith collected herself, hiccupped once more and stood up, the cloudy hair moving uneasily about her. She said with a grim composure:

"The same thing I suspect you're doing in that once, only you'll have to do better if you want to deceive anybody. What brings you to Eden —Lucifer?"

The serpent glanced down at himself and sent one or two long, sliding ripples gliding along his iridescent body. The angel shape that hung

in the air about him gradually faded, and the beauty deepened as it focused itself more strongly in the flesh he wore. After a moment he glanced up.

"How's that—better? Oh, I came down for a purpose. I have—business with Adam." His cool voice took on a note of grimness. "You may have heard a little trouble in heaven yesterday. That was me."

"Trouble?" echoed Lilith. She had almost forgotten the sounds of combat and the great battle cries of the seraphim in the depths of her own grief.

"It was a fine fight while it lasted," Lucifer grinned. "Blood running like water down the golden streets! I tell you, it was a relief to hear something beside 'hosannah' in heaven for a change! Well"—he shrugged—"they won. Too many of them were fools and stood by Jehovah. But we gave them a good fight, and we took part of the jasper walls with us when they hurled us over." He gave her a satisfied nod. "God won, but he'll think twice before He insults me again."

"Insults you?" echoed Lilith. "How?"

Lucifer drew himself up to a magnificent height. Radiance glowed along his scaled and gleaming body. "God made me of fire! Shall I bow down before this . . . this lump of clay they call Adam? He may be good enough for the other angels to worship when God points a finger, but he isn't good enough for me!"

"Is that why you're here?"

"Isn't it reason enough? I have a quarrel with this Adam!"

"You couldn't touch him," said Lilith desperately. "He's God's image, and remember, you were no match for God."

Lucifer stretched his magnificent, gleaming height and glared down at her.

"The creature's made of clay. He must have a flaw somewhere. What is it? You know him."

Lilith looked up at him speechless, a great excitement beginning to swell so tremendously in her that her half-formed body could hardly contain it. There was a chance! God himself had put a weapon straight into her hands!

"Yes, there is a flaw," she said. "I'll tell you . . . if you'll give me a promise."

"All right, I give it," said Lucifer carelessly. "Tell me."

She hesitated, choosing her words. "Your feud isn't with Adam. He never asked you to worship him. God did that. Your quarrel is with God, not Adam. The Man himself you can't touch, but God had given him a . . . a wife," she choked when she said it. "I think there's a weakness in her, and through her you could spoil God's plan. But you must spare the Man—for me."

Lucifer whistled soundlessly, lifting his brows. "Oh—?"

"I saw him first," said Lilith defensively. "I want him."

The serpent looked at her narrowly. "Why? No . . . never mind. I won't quarrel with you. I may have an idea to suggest to you later, if a plan of mine works out. You and I together could make quite a thing of hell."

Lilith winced a little. She and Adam together had had great prospects, once, too. Perhaps they still had—if God were not listening.

"You promise not to touch him, then?"

"Yes, I won't hurt your precious clod. You're right—my quarrel's with God, not that animated lump of clay named Adam. What's the secret?"

"Eden," said Lilith slowly, "is a testing ground. There are flaws in it, there must be, or neither of us would be here. God planted a Tree in the middle of the Garden and forbade anyone to touch it. That's the test . . . I think I see it now. It's a test of obedience. God doesn't trust man—he made him too strong. The Tree is the knowledge of Good and Evil, and God doesn't dare let that knowledge exist in the Garden, because he controls Man only by Man's ignorance of his own power. If either of them eats, then God will have to destroy that one quickly. You tempt the woman to eat, Lucifer, and leave Adam and Eden to me!"

The serpent eyed her sidelong. He laughed.

"If either of them fails in this test you're talking about, then God will know neither can be trusted, won't he? He'll know their present form's imperfect, and he'll destroy them both and work out some other plan for the world."

"Don't," Lilith pleaded. "You mustn't, Adam . . . see what it's done to her—!"

Lilith drew a deep breath. Excitement was rising like a tide in her, and the wind from nowhere swirled the dark hair in a cloud about her shoulders.

"Let him try!" she cried exultantly. "I can save Adam. God made a mistake when he put such power in the Garden. He shouldn't have left it living, half-conscious of itself. He shouldn't have let Adam know how close he is to the earth he was taken from. Adam and the Garden are one flesh, and the power of God is in them both. God can't destroy one without the other, and together they are very strong— If they defied God together, and I helped them—"

Lucifer looked at her, a trace of compassion on his handsome, reptilian face.

"God defeated *me*," he reminded her. "Do you think He couldn't you?"

She gave him a proud glance. "I am the Queen of Air and Darkness. I have secrets of my own, and powers not even God can control. If I join them with Adam's, and the Gardens. . . . God made the Garden alive and powerful, and Adam is one flesh with it, each incomplete without the other as Man is without woman. Adam has Eve now—but when Eve's gone he'll remember Lilith. I'll see that he remembers! And I'll see that he understands his danger. With my help, perhaps he can avert it."

"If God destroys Eve," said Lucifer, "he'll destroy Adam, too. They're one pattern."

"But he may not destroy them at the same time. I'll gamble on that. I'd kill her myself if I could, but I can't touch anything in the Garden without its own consent. . . . No, I'll have to wait until Eve proves to God her unfitness to wear flesh, and while he punishes her I must seize that moment to rouse the Garden. It's almost aware of itself already. I think I could awaken it—through Adam, perhaps. Adam and Eden are almost one, as Adam and I will be again if we can get rid of Eve. None of us separately has the power to defy God, but Eden and Adam and I together might do it!" She tossed back her head and the wild dark hair swirled like a fog about her. "Eden is an entity of its own—I think I could close a shell of space around us, and there are places in my Darkness where we could hide even from God!"

Lucifer narrowed his eyes at her. "It might work," he nodded slowly. "You're mad—but it might work, with my help. The woman is beautiful, in her way—" He laughed. "And what a revenge on God!"

"The woman," mused Lilith, "is in my body, and I am evil. . . . I think enough evil remains there that Eve will find you—interesting. Good luck, Lucifer!"

In a hollow, velvety cup in the Garden's very center the two Trees stood. One at the edge of the clearing was a dark Tree, the leaves folded like a cloak about a pale glow from within where the Fruit of Life hung hidden. But in the center of the hollow the Tree of Knowledge flaunted its scarlet fruit that burned with a flame almost of their own among the green and glossy leaves. Here was the heart of the Garden. Out of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil the beat went pulsing that shook the air of Eden.

Eve set one small, bare foot upon the downward slope and looked back timidly over her shoulder. The serpent flicked a forked red tongue at

her. His voice was cool and clear, and sweet as honey.

"Eva," he said softly. *"Eva—"*

She smiled and went on, he rippling after her with an unearthly beauty to his gait that is lost forever now. No one knows today how the serpent walked before the Fall. Of all human creatures only Eve knows that, and there were things Eve never told Adam.

They paused under the shadow of the Tree. In long, slow rhythms the air went pulsing past them. Eve's fair hair stirred a little, so strong was the rhythm here. All the Fruit of the Tree pushed out among the leaves to see her, and the nearer branches bent caressingly toward this woman who was of the flesh of Adam.

The nearest branch stooped down enticingly. Eve reached for a scarlet apple that dipped into her hand. Almost of itself it snapped free of the twig that held it. Eve stared at the apple in her palm, and her hand began to shake. She drew back against the serpent, a little whimper of terror rising in her throat.

The serpent dropped a coiled embrace about the lovely, light-clothed pallor of her body and bent his handsome, slanted head to hers, whispering at her ear in a voice so cool and sweet that the terror faded from her face. She smiled a little, and her hand steadied.

She lifted the Fruit of Knowledge to her lips. There was a hush all through the Garden as she hesitated for a long moment, the red fruit at her red mouth, her teeth denting the scarlet cheek of Knowledge. The last few timeless moments stood still while innocence yet reigned over Eden.

Then the serpent whispered again, urgently: *"Eva—"* he said.

LILITH stood shivering in Adam's arms.

"You were mine first," she was whispering fiercely. "You and I and the Garden—don't you remember? I was your wife before her, and you belong to me!"

Adam could see his own arms through the ephemeral stuff of Lilith's body. He was shaken by the violence in her voice, but his mind was too fogged with the unthinking blank of innocence to understand very clearly. He tried hard.

The rhythm that pulsed through Eden was curiously uneven now. Lilith knew what it meant, and excitement choked her. She cried more desperately:

"Adam . . . Adam! Don't let anything separate us, you and the Garden and I! You can hold us together if you try! I know you can! You—"

One great, annihilating throb shook through the air like thunder. The whole Garden reeled with it and every tree in Eden bowed as if before a tremendous wind. Adam looked up, aghast. But Lilith laughed a wild, excited laugh and cried, "This is it! Oh, hurry, Adam, hurry!"

She slipped through his arms that were still clasped about her and went fluttering effortlessly off through branches that did not impede her passage, Adam following half stunned with the stunned Garden. All Eden was still reeling from the violence of what had just happened beneath the Tree.

Lilith watched the sky as she ran. Would a great bolt of lightning come ravening down out of heaven to blast the woman out of being before they reached the Tree? "Wait, wait!" she panted voicelessly to God. "Give me a moment longer—" Would a bolt strike Adam, too, as he slipped

through the parting trees beside her? "Hurry!" she gasped again.

Breathless, they paused at the edge of the hollow where the Tree stood. Looking down, they could see Eve just clear of the shadow of it, the fruit in her hand with one white bite flawing its scarlet cheek. She was staring about the Garden as if she had never seen it before. *Where was God? Why had He not blasted her as she stood there?*

Lilith in her first wild glance could not see the serpent except for a glitter of iridescence back in the shadow of the Tree. Even in her terrible excitement she smiled wryly. Lucifer was taking no chances with God.

But she had no time to waste now on Lucifer or on Eve. For some inexplicable reason God was staying His hand, and she must make the most of the respite. For when God was finished with Eve He would turn to Adam, and before that much had to be done. Adam was her business now, and the living Eden, and all eternity waited on what the next few moments held.

She stood out on the lip of the hollow and a great dark wind from nowhere swelled monstrously about her, tossing out her hair until it was a cloud that shut her from sight. Out of the cloud her voice came rolling in tremendous rhythms paced to the rhythm at which Eden breathed—and Adam.

"Garden!" she called. "Eden—hear me! I am Lilith, the wife of Adam—"

She could feel a vast, dim awareness stirring around her. All through Eden the wakening motion ran, drawing closer, welling up deeply from the earth underfoot, monstrously, wonderfully, a world coming alive at her call.

"Adam!" she cried. "Adam, do you hear me? You and Eden are one flesh, and Eve has destroyed you both. She has just brought knowledge into Eden, where God dares not let it exist. God will destroy you all, because of Eve . . . unless you listen to me—"

She felt Adam's attention torn away from Eve and focusing upon herself in fear and wonder. She felt the Garden's wakening awareness draw around him with growing intensity, until it was as if the earth of Eden and the flesh of Man quickened into one, married by the same need for one another as the thought of parting and destruction shuddered through each.

Was this what God had planned as an ending for His divine scheme, as it was the beginning of Lilith's? She had no time to wonder, but the thought crossed her mind awesomely even as she wooed the Garden in a voice as sweet and coaxing as the voice she used to Adam.

And the whole great Garden shuddered ponderously around her, awareness thrilling down every tendril and branch and blade, pulsing up out of the very hill on which she stood. And all of it was Adam. The Garden heard and hung upon her words, and Adam heard, and they three together were all that existed. Success was in her hands. She could feel it. And then—

"Adam . . . Adam!" screamed Eve beneath the Tree.

Lilith's sonorous voice paused in its invocation; the Garden hesitated around her.

"Adam!" cried Eve again, terror flattening all the sweetness out of her voice.

And behind Lilith, in a drugged voice, Adam said: "Eve—?"

"God . . . God, destroy her now!" prayed Lilith soundlessly. And aloud, "Eve has no part in Eden!

Don't listen to her, Adam! She'll destroy you and the Garden together!"

"Adam, Adam! Where are you?"

"Coming—" said Adam, still in that thick, drugged voice.

Lilith whirled in the mist of her cloudy hair. Where was God! Why had He stayed His hand? Now was the time to strike, if her hope were not to fail. Now, now! Surely the lightning would come ravening down from heaven if she could hold Adam a moment longer—

"Adam, wait!" she cried desperately. "Adam, you know you love me! If you leave—"

Her voice faltered as he peered at her as blindly as if he had never seen her before. The haloed light was like fire all around him, and her words had been a drug to him as they had been to the Garden, until the earth that loved and listened to her had been one with his own earth-formed flesh; a moment ago there had been nothing in creation for Adam or for Eden but this one woman speaking out of the dark. But now—

"Adam!" screamed Eve again in that flat, frightened voice.

"Don't listen!" cried Lilith frantically. "She doesn't belong here! You can't save her now! God will destroy her, and He'll destroy you, too, if you leave me! Stay here and let her die! You and I will be alone again, in the Garden . . . Adam, don't listen!"

"I . . . I have to listen," he stammered almost stupidly. "Get out of my way, Lilith. Don't you understand? She's my own flesh—I have to go."

Lilith stared at him dumbly. His own flesh! She had forgotten that. She had leaned too heavily on his oneness with the Garden—she had forgotten he was one with Eve, too. The prospect of defeat was suddenly like lead in her. If God would only strike now— She swayed forward in one last desperate effort to hold him back from Eve while the Garden stirred uneasily around them, frightened with Lilith's terror, torn with Adam's distress. She wavered between Adam and the valley as if her ephemeral body could hold him, but he went through her as if through a cloud and stumbled blindly downhill toward the terrified Eve beneath the Tree with the fruit in her hand and a dreadful knowledge on her face.

From here Lilith could see what Adam had not yet. She laughed suddenly, wildly, and cried:

"Look at her, Adam! Look!" And Adam blinked and looked.

Eve stood naked beneath the Tree. That burning beauty which had clothed her like a garment was gone with her divine innocence and she was no longer the flawless goddess who had wakened on Adam's shoulder that morning. She stood shivering a little, looking forlorn and somehow pinched and thin, almost a caricature of the perfect beauty that had gone down the hill with the serpent an hour ago. But she did not know that. She looked up at Adam as he hesitated above her, and smiled uncertainly with a sort of leer in her smile.

"Oh, there you are," she said, and even her voice was harsher now. "Everything looked so . . . so queer, for a minute. Look." She held up the fruit. "It's good. Better than anything *you* ever gave me. Try it."

Lilith stared at her from the hilltop with a horror that for a moment blanked out her growing terror because of God's delay. Was knowledge, then, as ugly as this? Why

had it destroyed Eve's beauty as if it were some evil thing? Perfect knowledge should have increased her strength and loveliness in the instant before God struck her down, if— Suddenly Lilith understood. Perfect knowledge! But Eve had only tasted the fruit, and she had only a warped half-knowledge from that single taste. The beauty of her innocence was lost, but she had not yet gained the beauty of perfect knowledge. Was this why God delayed? So long as her knowledge was imperfect perhaps she was no menace to God's power in Eden. And yet she had disobeyed, she had proved herself unworthy of the trust of God— Then why did He hesitate? Why had He not blasted her as she stood there with the apple at her lips? A panic was rising in Lilith's throat. *Could it be that He was laughing, even now?* Was He giving her the respite she had prayed for, and watching her fail in spite of it?

"Taste the apple," said Eve again, holding it out.

"Adam!" cried Lilith despairingly from the edge of the hill. "Adam, look at me! You loved me first—don't you remember? Look at me, Adam!"

And Adam turned to look. The wind, which had clouded her from sight in the darkness of her hair, had calmed. She stood now, luminous on the hilltop, the darkness parted like a river by the whiteness of her shoulders. And she was beautiful with a beauty that no mortal woman will ever wear again. She was Adam's first dream of beauty, perfect in the warm, pale flesh. No mortal loveliness will ever again approach that beauty which Adam dreamed on his first night in Eden.

"I was first!" cried Lilith. "You loved me before her—come back to me now, before God strikes you both! Come back, Adam!"

He stared up at her miserably. He looked back at the flawed, shivering creature at his side, knowledge curiously horrible in her eyes. He stared at Eve, too, a long stare. And then he reached for the apple.

"Adam—no!" shrieked Lilith. "See what knowledge did to Eve! You'll be ugly and naked, like her! Don't taste it, Adam! You don't know what you're doing!"

Over the poised red fruit he looked up at her. The light quivered gloriously all around him. He stood like a god beneath the Tree, radiant, perfect.

"Yes, I know," he said, in a clearer voice than she had ever heard him use before.

"God will destroy you!" wailed Lilith, and rolled her eyes up to look for the falling thunderbolt that might be hurtling downward even now.

"I know," said Adam again. And then, after a pause, "You don't understand, Lilith. Eve is my own flesh, closer than Eden—closer than you. Don't you remember what God said? *Forsaking all others—*"

"Eve!" screamed Lilith hopelessly. "Stop him! Your punishment's certain—are you going to drag him down, too?"

Eve looked up, knowledge dark in her blue eyes. She laughed a thin laugh and the last vestige of her beauty went with it.

"Leave him to you?" she sneered. "Oh no! He and I are one flesh—we'll go together. Taste the apple, Adam!"

He turned it obediently in his hand; his teeth crunched through scarlet skin into the sweet white flesh inside. There was a tremendous silence all through the Garden; nothing stirred in Eden while Adam chewed and swallowed the Fruit of

Knowledge. And then turned to stare down into Eve's lifted eyes while awareness of himself as an individual, free-willed being dawned gradually across his awakening mind.

And then the burning glory that clothed him paled, shimmered, went out along his limbs. He, too, was naked. The queer, pinched look of humanity shivered over that magnificent body, and he was no longer magnificent, no longer Adam.

Lilith had forgotten to look for God. Sickness of the heart was swelling terribly in her, and for a moment she no longer cared about God, or Eden, or the future. This was not Adam any more— It would never be Adam again—

"Listen," said Eve in a small, intimate voice to Adam. "How quiet it is! Why, it's the music. The seraphim aren't singing any more around the Throne!"

Lilith glanced up apathetically. That meant, then, that God was coming— But even as she looked up a great golden chorus resounded serenely from high over Eden. Adam tipped his tarnished head to listen.

"You're right," he agreed. "They've stopped their song."

Lilith did not hear him. That dreadful sickness in her was swelling and changing, and she knew now what it was—hatred. Hatred of Adam and Eve and the thing they had done to her. Hatred of these naked caricatures, who had been the magnificent half-god she had loved and the shape she had put on to delight him. True, they might finish the eating of knowledge and grow perfect again, but it would be a perfection that shut her out. They were one flesh together, and even God had failed her now. Looking down, she loathed them both. Eve's very existence was an insult to the unflawed perfection which Lilith still wore, and Adam—Adam shivering beneath the Tree with a warped, imperfect knowledge leering in his eyes—

A sob swelled in her throat. He had been flawless once—she would never forget that. Almost she loved the memory still as it lingered about this shivering human creature beneath the Tree. So long as he was alive she knew now she would never be free of it; this weakness would torment her still for the flesh that had once been Adam. The prospect of an eternity of longing for him, who would never exist again, was suddenly unbearable to her.

She tipped her head back and looked up through the glory above Eden where golden voices chanted that neither Adam nor Eve would ever hear again.

"Jehovah!" she sobbed. "Jehovah! Come down and destroy us all! You were right—they are both too flawed to bring anything but misery to all who know them. God, come down and give us peace!"

Eve squealed in terror at Adam's side. "Listen!" she cried. "Adam, listen to her!"

Answering human terror dawned across the pinched features that had once been Adam's handsome, immortal face. "The Tree of Life!" he shouted. "No one can touch us if we eat that fruit!"

He whirled to scramble up the slope toward the dark Tree, and Lilith's heart ached to watch how heavily he moved. Yesterday's wonderful, easy litheness was gone with his beauty, and his body was a burden to him now.

But he was not to reach the Tree of Life. For suddenly glory brightened unbearably over the Garden.

A silence was in the sky, and the breeze ceased to blow through Eden.

"*Adam,*" said a Voice in the great silence of the Garden, "*hast thou eaten of the Tree?*"

Adam glanced up the slope at Lilith, standing despairingly against the sky. The beauty she still wore was like a shroud upon her, because it no longer had any meaning in Eden since the half-god who had dreamed it was gone. He looked at Eve beside him, a clumsy caricature of the loveliness he had dreamed of. There was bitterness in his voice.

"The woman thou gavest me—" he began reproachfully, and then hesitated, meeting Eve's eyes. The old godlike goodness was lost to him now, but he had not fallen low enough yet to let Eve know what he was thinking. He could not say, "The woman Thou gavest me has ruined us both—but I had a woman of my own before her and she never did me any harm." No, he could not hurt this flesh of his flesh so deeply, but he was human now and he could not let her go unrebuked. He went on sulkily, "—she gave me the apple, and I ate."

The Voice said awfully, "Eve—?"

Perhaps Eve was remembering that other voice, cool and sweet, murmuring, "Eva—" in the cool, green dimness of the Garden, the voice that had whispered secrets she would never share with Adam. Perhaps if he had been beside her now—but he was not, and her resentment bubbled to her lips in speech.

"The serpent beguiled me," she told God sullenly, "and I ate."

There was silence for a moment in the Garden. Then the Voice said, "Lucifer—" with a sorrow in the sound that had not stirred for the man's plight, or the woman's. "Lucifer, my enemy, come forth from the Tree." There was a divine compassion in the Voice even as It pronounced sentence. "Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life—"

Out from beneath the shadow of the Tree a flat and shining length came pouring through the grass. This was the hour for the shedding of beauty: the serpent had lost the fire-bright splendor that had been his while Lucifer dwelt in his flesh, but traces lingered yet in the unearthly fluidness of his motion, in his shining iridescence. He lifted a wedged head toward Eve, flickered his tongue at her once and then dropped back into the grass. Its ripple above him marked his course away. Eve drew one long, sobbing breath for that green twilight hour in the Garden, that Adam would never guess, as she watched him ripple away.

"Adam, Eve," went on the Voice quietly, "the Garden is not for you." There was a passionless pity in It as the Garden stood still to listen. "I made your flesh too weak, because your godhood was too strong to trust. You are not to blame for that—the fault was Mine. But Adam . . . Eve . . . what power did I put in you, that the very elements of fire and darkness find kinship with you? What flaw is in you, that though you are the only two human things alive, yet you cannot keep faith with one another?"

Adam glanced miserably up toward Lilith standing motionless on the hill's edge, clothed in the flawless beauty he had dreamed for her and would never see again. Eve's eyes followed the serpent through the grass that was blurred for her because of the first tears of Eden. Neither of them answered.

"You are not fit yet to put forth your hand to the Tree of Life, and eat, and live forever," went on the Voice after a moment. "Lilith is to blame for that. She came between man and me before he was ready for a mate, while he still dreamed the dream of Eve I had put in his sleeping mind. She usurped the shape of that dream, and she has her own punishment for that. She brought the Tree of Life into being before I was ready to let it grow, and because she did it Adam and Eve must go forth from Eden. Man . . . woman . . . you are not yet fit for perfect knowledge or immortality. You are not yet fit for trust. But for Lilith the tale would have spun itself out here in the walls of Eden, but now you must go beyond temptation and work your own salvation out in the sweat of your brow, in the lands beyond the Garden. Adam, I dare not trust you any longer in your kinship with the earth I shaped you from. Cursed is the ground for your sake, Adam—it shall be one with you no longer. But I promise this . . . in the end you shall return to it—" The Voice fell silent, and there was from far above the flash of a flaming sword over the gate of Eden.

In the silence Lilith laughed. It was a clear, ringing sound from the hill's edge: "Deal with me now," she said in an empty voice. "I have no desire to exist any longer in a world that has no Adam—destroy me, Jehovah."

The Voice said emotionlessly, "You are punished already, by the fruit of what you did."

"Punished enough!" wailed Lilith in sudden despair. "Make an end of it, Jehovah!"

"With man's end," said God quietly. "No sooner. You four among you have shattered a plan in Eden that you must shape anew before your travail ends. Let the four of you build a new plan with the elements of your being—Adam is Earth, Lucifer is Fire, Lilith is Air and Darkness, Eve the Mother of All Living, the fertile seas from which all living springs. Earth, Air, Fire and Water—you thought your plan was better than Mine. Work it out for yourselves!"

"What is our part to be, Lord?" asked Adam in a small, humbled voice.

"Earth and water," said the Voice. "The kingdom of earth for you and the woman and your children after you."

"I was Adam's wife before her,"

wailed Lilith jealously. "What of me . . . and mine?"

The Voice fell silent for a while. Then it said quietly: "Make your own choice, Queen of Air and Darkness."

"Let my children and Adam's haunt hers to their graves, then!" decided Lilith instantly. "Mine are the disinherited—let them take vengeance! Let her and hers beware of my children who wail in the night, and know she deserves their wrath. Let them remind her always that Adam was mine before her!"

"So be it," said the Voice. And for an instant there was silence in Eden while the shadow of times to come brooded inscrutably in the mind of God. Lilith caught flashes of it in the glory so bright over Eden that every grass blade had a splendor which hurt the eyes. She saw man loving his birthplace upon earth with a deep-rooted love that made it as dear as his very flesh to him, so that dimly he might remember the hour when all earth was as close to him as his newly created body. She saw man cleaving to one woman as dear as the flesh of his flesh, yet remembering the unattainable and the lost—Lilith, perfect in Eden. She looked down from the hilltop and met Adam's eyes, and voicelessly between them a long farewell went flashing.

No one was watching Eve. She was blinking through tears, remembering a twilight hour and a fire-bright beauty that the dust had quenched a moment ago at God's command. And then . . . then there was the faintest rustling in the air around her, and a cool, clear voice was murmuring:

"Eva—" against her cheek.

She stared. There was nothing. But—

"Eva," said the voice again. "Give me my vengeance too—upon the Man. Pretty Eva, do you hear me? Call your first child Kayn . . . Eva, will you do as I say? Call him Kayn the Spear of my vengeance, for he shall set murder loose among Adam's sons. Remember, Eva—"

And Eve echoed in a small, obedient whisper, "Cain . . . Cain."

THE END.

THE DEVIL'S RESCUE

by L. RON HUBBARD

● **From an open boat near the Straits of Magellan, any rescue is welcome—even such a one!**

Illustrated by Schneeman

He had been cold so long that he had even ceased to dream of the great log crackling in the kitchen of his New England home. He just shivered now and then, becoming

conscious of the fact that it was bitter for a moment and then relapsing into a blue ache which ate him from the mop of his salt-incrusted hair to his cracked feet.

He had stopped courting the madness of envisioning the great dinners he had eaten, recalling rather the peculiarly delicious flavor of the last biscuit—moldy inedible, which had vanished to its last crumb some two days before.

At the end of all these days he was exhausted with holding himself against the lurches, the violent pitches and whipping rolls of the nineteen-foot lifeboat and now he braced himself not at all but lay prone in five inches of gradually rising water and limply shifted with it from side to side.

It was hell to open his eyes once the salt had formed over them while shut, but some deep instinct in him bade him, now and then, to look up at the tattered ensign which hung inverted on the mast. The savage energy of wind tearing past the red-and-white-and-blue wool wearied him and again he shut his eyes.

It was almost sunset. Sunset of his twenty-second day in an open boat somewhere south and west of that ironically named place, the Cape of Good Hope.

First he had unloaded the cabin boy over the rail and into the gray restlessness of the sea. He had done it with great sorrow at the time, although it seemed to him now that the important thing about it was, how strong he had been. What determination had shone out of him that he would not suffer a like fate! How bravely had he braced himself against that oar, bidding the crew bend their backs until the wind shifted and he could set the sail.

Then he had unloaded the cook. It had seemed strange that the fellow had not been able to live longer on his fat. And the wind hadn't shifted, and when dawn rose, the reason why he'd had to carry so much starboard helm the last hour became apparent and so they had dumped the "bow oar" into the sea.

That was all after the wind had started to blow straight off the Cape. There was nothing astern but awks, he told them. Awks and ice, and they had nothing to lose but their lives which weren't worth much anyway. And so they'd dumped the bow oar's dead heaviness into the sea, whipped into a creamy froth now by the rising wind.

About then he had ceased keeping track of the rest of his crew. The captain, had he not been dead on the schooner's house and probably in a hundred fathom by now, would have kept a very punctual log about it, doubtless. But not his mate.

And then a couple or five days ago he had finally gotten tired of watching an arm swing back and forth from the thwart and to still an urge which demanded to discover if man is fair food, he had hitched himself upright and, after an hour's work, had managed to slide the body into the thick of a craggy wave which gulped and gave up its prey no more.

He had stared in stupefaction, then, at the biscuit which floated upon the sea-water in the bilge. He wondered that the bos'n had not eaten it long before. But the bos'n's loss was his gain and so he had eaten.

THE FOOLISHNESS of eating came to him afterward. For eating would prolong his life yet a little while and he was heartily sick of the way the boat kept lurching, rolling,

pitching. If the sail wasn't now his sea anchor, he would have tried to steady the thing with it.

The sound of the wind had gotten into his head along with the slap of the single remaining halyard and he was certain that he would never be able to get it out again. The sea, too, made far too much tumult, for each time a wave towered up its forty feet the wind hacked it down again and sent the top hissing straight out until the air was a horizontal sheet of water, discoloring the already leaden sky.

Wondering a little at his energy he put in a time at bailing, scooping up some water, lifting the can to the gunwale, spilling it out, bringing it back, scooping it up, lifting it to the gunwale, spilling it out, bringing it back, scooping it up, spilling it out, lifting it to the gunwale—

He stared for a little at his empty hand thinking dully that the sea couldn't be hungry after swallowing eight corpses one after the other. A small part of him was alarmed for now the boat would fill, little by little, at last to sink. The greater part of him said, with some relief that well he wouldn't have to bail any more anyway now that the can was gone.

Why he didn't get pneumonia or die of cold like the others was a problem which he would not now have to solve. That would save his head a lot of useless work. For a man had no right to live at all somewhere off Good Hope in the awfulness of its winter with the ferocity of its gales and the chill of its water; not even a bucko mate in the full strength of his twenty-five years.

The streak of irony in his nature had risen up many times to aid him, and perhaps in it there was some small explanation of why he had outlasted those sturdy but stolid souls to whom death was simply death and not a rather good joke on the unwary.

After all, he pondered in one of his few wholly lucid moments, what more could he ask? For a good five hours he had had a command, for when the mast had been shivered striking down the captain, it had been his lot to valiantly strive to keep the schooner afloat with pumps which took out only half of what came in through the sprung seams.

And now again didn't he have a command, his solitary own, nineteen feet in length, seven feet in beam? And what mattered it if he was riding to the slashed sails and boom which made up the sea anchor? What mattered it if there were now eight good inches of water to slosh in the bottom, over the bottom boards continually and over himself at least half of the time.

The clearness of thought began to seep from him and he stared half unseeing at wind-split Old Glory.

The whole thing was impossible and he achieved the belief that he, Edward Lanson, was not here at all, that neither Cape of Good Hope nor South Atlantic existed. Somebody had made a very great mistake and had hung up the wrong scenery around him. He wasn't he and the sea was not at all. The dark which dropped so slowly, coming down like the easy fingers of death, would take everything away and he would awake in a dry bed to a breakfast fit for a sailor, finding that this had been nothing but nightmare.

He had dreamed the clammy flesh of the dead as he jettisoned them. He had dreamed the weeping of the cabin boy who wept only because of the sorrow his mother would feel.

He had dreamed even the *Gloucester Maid.*

He came to himself at the wrench of a powerful sea. It was quite dark now but over him the wind screamed and about him crashed the sea, unbelievable in its power to destroy, conscienceless in its voracity. It had only to wait—and it could, forever.

He roused himself, for now the bilge covered his face at each roll and, though he could not discover any reason for not strangling and thereby putting a swift period to his pain, it took less energy to lift himself with his back to the 'midship thwart than it did to force himself to lie and die.

There was ice in the spray which rattle against his back. His chin sunk hopelessly upon his breast, he rode out the thundering hours, coming to himself now and then and remaining for whole minutes with his wits more clear than they had been ever before in all his life. He thought of the time he had wasted, the countless easy hours spent wholly without purpose, and somehow it amused him to know that all men squander their time, purblind to the hour, often close at hand, when precious few minutes and seconds would be theirs to spend.

The water was now up to his waist as he sat, a full fourteen inches above the bottom boards, eighteen from the keel. Its shifting weight made the craft stagger and take on even more until sometimes half the gunwale was alight with a phosphorescent gleam of foaming spray. The movement pulled him back and forth so that he had to brace himself a little with his arms along the thwart; he had not the strength to adjust himself completely.

If he had even been close to the shipping lanes, he was far from them now, beyond any possibility of rescue. As he was driven southward he approached Antarctica and the days, each after the last, would increase their cold and the wind its content of ice. A thousand or four thousand miles away was Hobart. A thousand or five hundred directly into the whip of the gale which drove him off was Capetown. Somehow it was strange to know that actual solid land was still in existence upon the planet, that ships still plowed the deep, that he still lived when all these others were long dead.

It must have been close to eleven in that wailing night when he saw a light. Raised high on the crest and then dropped into the trough as he was continually, it was a sketchy glimpse. Stubbornly he would not allow himself to know it, for he full realized that the disappointment would be too agonizing for his remaining sanity to bear.

And yet, each time he was hurtled dizzily in the dark to the foam-toothed peaks, he glimpsed the light anew. Before long, though still refusing to wholeheartedly support the sight, he began to ponder its sourse for certainty it resembled no beacon, nor did it seem to be either a running or a range light, for its color was not red, or green, or white but rather a pale-yellow admixed with green. And it was not of one source but rather of many.

At last he believed partly in it and reserved his judgment only about rescue, for it was not to be borne that a ship should pass so near without sighting him.

Now, in these minutes when, believe it whether he would, he might possibly be hauled dripping from the maw of death, his mind refused

to function, embattled in itself between desire and refusal to hope.

Ship or land, whichever, it bore steadily toward him, growing better defined with each soaring heave of the sea around. It grew larger but no brighter.

He had known of men going mad in an open boat and seeing all manner of things and then turning berserk when they refused to be real; and it seemed to him that some satanic plan was afloat to draw him into croaking cheers, after which the vision would vanish. But perhaps if he still refused and did not cheer at all, then he himself would be the victor, outwitting the hostile jokester who saw fit to so work this thing upon him.

He had averted cannibalism. Now, praise, God, could he stave off madness, too? He would be cunning. He would rest his chin upon his breast and give no sign, and when at last it was too near to withdraw he would seize upon it and so win his life.

Thus, covertly, did he come to believe in the thing and his mind, freed from the struggle, kindled with knowledge that dry in the locker in the stern sheets were four flares. Without betraying any anxiety, he made his way over the thwarts and lifted the cover. His hands were stiff and raw, and it took him sometime to finally pull the tape from one with sufficient force to ignite the cap.

Hotly it smoldered, blinding him when it broke into light. He was startled by the sight of the tumbling seas and the frailty of the half-sunken lifeboat. The enormity of his plight rose up into his throat.

He shielded his eyes from the glare and again sought the thing. He could not see it so plainly now, but he knew that it was closer. Strange the outline it had taken on for the whole affair was aglow and it appeared to be nothing more than a triangle of pale fire.

Certainly no ship, however stanch could plow directly into the gale, square sails set even to t'g'l'nts!

And certainly those bluff bows and reaching sprit belonged to no staid grain ship, but to a relic of far gone days when sail was the sea's sole mistress!

The warmth of the flare was good to his hand. He noted its feeling carefully, for still he had no faith in this thing. Reason stated that it could not exist and, if it did, that it could not sail in such a fashion and, if it did, that it would never be booming up from Antarctica.

But there it was, growing larger, and he fancied that, above the yell of wind, he could make out a repeated hail and the creak of straining gear. Then, in an abrupt lull, he heard the thunder of slacked canvas, amid which a voice clearly cried, "Ahoy the whaleboat! Stand by to take a line!"

It was a trick of the sea, that order. It was a failure in his head that the old merchantman was standing to on his windward to drift down upon him with the wind and sea. But all too plainly he heard the canvas booming now as it was momentarily spilled of wind.

The flare did not seem to affect the strange glow which outlined the entire craft, but as the vessel neared, he saw that the sails were scarlet, not yellow-green, and that the masts were black, gleaming with spray.

A line whistled by his ear and a monkey fist punked into a wave beyond him. He was almost afraid, in a sudden fit of premonition which

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stood the hair along his neck, to touch that heaving line. The moment's lull was chased away by the returning scream of wind, and once the hemp was in his hand, he was frightened at the thought of letting it go.

Swiftly he hauled it to him, unmindful of the pain of it through his raw palms. The hawser thumped on the gunwale and he brought it up to carry it forward and drop it over a bitt.

"Haul away!" he cried, his own voice sounding strangely loud.

The jerk on the lifeboat slammed him to the thwart and he hung on, staring up at the nearing vessel, split apart as he was by the desire to continue his life and the knowledge that this was somehow an awful thing.

At the rail were many faces, unearthly white against the glowing scarlet of the canvas. Not a sound came from them now. He could feel the intensity of eyes upon him and the atmosphere of the vessel reached out and clothed him in clammy garments.

A line dropped down beside him and he placed the bowline on the bight about both his seat and his shoulders and presently, as the sea dropped away with his boat, he felt himself hauled swiftly up.

Hands pulled him down from the rail to the deck and, ordinarily, at this moment of salvation, he would have given way to an intense desire to lean upon their support. But of their faces he could make out nothing save blots of glowing white.

Not a word was spoken until one sailor, drawing his knife, made as if to cut away the lifeboat.

"Don't!" cried Lanson in sudden horror.

All faces turned to him.

"Haul it astern," he begged. "It's not much to tow and . . . and it's my only command."

The knife poised over the hawser for seconds and then the sailor withdrew it and thrust it again into his belt.

LANSON looked up and down the deck, anxious to confront an officer and be told that what he thought was untrue and that this greeting was only a trick of his exhausted nerves.

By the mast he saw a larger fellow, seated and seemingly disinterested, passing a marlin spike from fist to fist. A visored cap sat upon his head and Lanson stumbled toward him, hoping that here was the mate, a man with a face.

But the mate had no face whatever.

"I am Edward Lanson, mate of the schooner *Gloucester Maid,* foundered three weeks or more ago off Cape of Good Hope."

The fellow turned up his featureless face and continued to pass the marlin spike back and forth. Finally he made a motion with his head toward the quarterdeck and Lanson found himself supported in that direction by the members of the crew.

Any exultation he had felt in his rescue was spent now, for it was all too apparent that this ship, hemp-rigged, low of waist and high of stern and fo'c's'le, should have ceased to sail centuries before.

The crew stopped at the bottom of the ladder to the poop and Lanson looked up to find a tall, nervous fellow up there, dress in an ancient Spanish mode with the silver hilts of pistols protruding from his sash and rapier sweeping back in a thin, bright line. But here, thank God, was a face!

"The *Gloucester Maid,* Edward Lanson, mate, sir."

"Dead?"

"My crew, sir, my crew and my captain everyone."

The man on the upper deck took a restless pace back and forth before he faced Lanson again. The dark eyes flamed strangely.

"This is ill done, Mr. Mate. Dead, you say, everyone but you?"

"Aye."

"Foundered off the Cape?"

"Aye."

"And adrift three weeks in an open boat."

"Aye."

"You . . . you have no curiosity about the deck on which you stand?"

"I would rather not, sir. I am weary."

"Of course! But you are a prudent man, Mr. Mate. And you would lie if you said you did not know that before you stands Captain Vanderbeck."

Lanson's knees were buckling with exhaustion and only the hands held him erect.

"Take him below," said Vanderbeck. "Give him stout wine. Madeira with a little pilot bread broken in it. When he wakes give him food." He did not have to raise his voice to get above the wind.

He turned about and paced into the dark of the quarterdeck while the sailors eased Lanson down a companionway and so into a bunk. Presently one came and gave him the medicine prescribed, and then, when the door was shut and he was alone, Lanson let his head sink into the pillow and out of him seeped all concern, fleeing before the delicious desire to sleep forever.

WHEN HE AWOKE he found that he still could feel the uneven lurching of the lifeboat, so long had he endured it. The motion was at vari-

Continued on page 108

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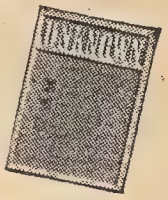

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Continued from page 105

ance with that of this ancient merchantman and he made very unsteady progress out of the bunk. It was with surprise that he found it dark outside his port and he wondered if he could have slept through twenty-four hours. In any case he was very refreshed compared to what he had been, and he drank some more wine and ate a little pilot bread and began to wonder if any more solid fare would be offered.

His clothes had been rinsed, he found, in fresh water and now hung upon a rack, almost dry. He washed his sore body in a bucket placed there for that purpose and used a half of the bottle of salve which had been left beside the bucket; it cooled his salt-stung skin and allowed him to move without wincing. All the while the cabin kept going up and down and back and forth, a fantasy of the ceaseless motion of the lifeboat, though when he steadied himself against these expected lunges, he only upset his own balance which was overcome by the steadier movement of the vessel itself.

In a little time, when he was at last dressed and ready, as though somebody had been watching him all the while, the faceless mate put his head in at the door. He said no word but extended a scrap of parchment on which was written:

"You will do me the favor of dining in my cabin. VANDERBECK.

"What day is this?" said Lanson.

But the mate withdrew without a word and his sea boots left no sound in the passageway. Lanson turned to a mirror and nervously fixed the knot in his sailor's scarf.

All his life he had had an uncanny awareness of time so that no matter the circumstances he was always able to count off the bells without the aid of a watch. As he became more clearly himself he realized that there was something very wrong in its being night and, though he had no true check of it, he felt that his sleep had been of at least thirty-six hours duration. Remembering, he knew that he had awakened three or four times, each time to find a watcher at his side, ready with a warm broth. But it was all indistinct as though it had happened to another.

He combed his long hair with his fingers and then fell to studying his face, not really wanting to for fear of what he might discover. But there was life in his dark eyes, color in his sunken cheeks and lips. No, there was no doubt about his being still alive, no more than there was any doubt about his recovery.

He fingered the note and pondered the captain's name, summing up what he had already seen and heard. And then, suddenly he sank down on the edge of his bed and cupped his face in his worn hands.

What release did he have now?

Why hadn't they let him die out there alone?

For it was quite clear to Edward Lanson now, that he faced an endless life of storm in the company of a madman with a crew long dead!

The door swung silently inward and the impassive mate was there again, gesturing mildly that Lanson was to follow without more delay. Lanson avoided looking at the white expanse between cap and collar, at the fingers with their all too prominent joints. He followed.

THE MAIN CABIN was ornate with carved blackwood furniture, glowing silks and oriental carpets. Along the bulkheads to either side were rows of chests, camphor and ivory

and teak, from which drooled the luster of pearls or gaped a little over a load of dull gold coins. The ports were twenty feet athwartship and full seven feet tall, all of cunningly set glass to make compasses and tritons and sea horses; through this, trailing far behind them, glowed their frothing wake, leading off into the gray dark and the shrieking wind.

Before Lanson paid heed to the occupant of the room he searched for and found the lifeboat, planing behind them from its taut painter, bow fouled in its sea anchor.

Vanderbeck stood with his back to the companionway, staring gloomily through the stern ports. When Lanson touched the back of a chair, making a slight noise, the captain turned slowly. He had taken off pistols and rapier and had changed sea boots for buckled slippers, but he was still garbed in black silk which gave his face an unnatural glow.

"Wine?" said Vanderbeck.

"As you will," said Lanson.

The captain waved him into a seat at the table but did not himself sit down. Watching the man's restive pacing, Lanson broke some dried fruit in his hands and chased it down with excellent port.

"You are a fellow of remarkable indestructibility," said Vanderbeck.

"I might," ventured Lanson, "say the same of you."

"Yes . . . yes, that's so, I suppose. But blast me, Mr. Mate, if I'd enjoy twenty-one days in an open boat, dumping over the crew one by one."

"I . . . I'd rather not talk about it, sir, if you please."

"Yes, yes, yes, of course! Blast me, of course! Good fruit, eh?"

"Very tasty."

"Good, good. Got it from a derelict named the *Martha Howe*. Captain must have been a fool to desert her. There she was, floating high, and where was he? Sharkbait, most likely. A joke on the fellow,

Lanson drank a little more wine.

"Marvelous what one finds bobbing around," said Vanderbeck. "God love us, a man begins to believe that the accursed world is only intent upon one thing—giving all their riches to Old Man Sea."

"I suppose one would think so," said Lanson, "looking at all these chests."

"These? Rubble, Mr. Mate. I should show you what there is in the forward hold. But here's the dinner." He sat down and the sailor who had entered laid the board with smoothly mechanical motions. His face, too, was featureless.

"But what worth is it?" demanded Vanderbeck. "It can't be spent. It can't buy me what *I* want! Have some beef."

Lanson ate as slowly as he could, experiencing difficulty with an insane desire to snatch out with both hands and bolt everything in sight. Neither of them said anything more until they had finished and the steward had brought forth some liquors and coffee.

VANDERBECK sank back in his chair and examined his watch, comparing it with an ancient chronometer on another table a short distance away. While he was so engaged a shadow was thrown in the path of the swinging lamp. Lanson's liquor glass slopped a little.

The captain of the *Gloucester Maid*, recognizable only by his clothes, having no slightest features from chin to brow, stood deferentially at Vanderbeck's chair. Lanson felt that he was being looked upon, but he tried to make no sign.

"Course eas'-nor'eas' and wind strong, sir," said the captain of Lanson's foundered ship.

"Eas'-nor'-eas'," repeated Vanderbeck. "When do we pass the Cape?"

"At midnight, sir."

"Perhaps," said Vanderbeck, "we'll not be turned back this time. Steady as you go."

The *Gloucester Maid's* master touched his cap and withdraw.

"And maybe we will," said Vanderbeck. "That's the only hope. To pass the Cape and be quit of this forever. Hah, Mr. Mate, we'll have a drink on it, for I very much fear that your own fate also depends upon it."

Lanson drank with him.

"Perhaps," said Vanderbeck, growing more expansive, "*he'll* not even board us this night!"

Lanson sipped his drink. "Has *he* ever failed?"

Vanderbeck clouded, glancing around. "Must you rob me of even the wish? No, never failed. Not in all these hundreds of years. But by this watch he's close to ten minutes overdue. That's unusual."

They lapsed into silence, both of them waiting, Lanson knowing full well who was coming and why and marveling slightly that he in his youth should be wise in lore so old.

The Dark One did not disappoint them, though the time had progressed almost an hour. There was a swirl of wind upon the deck, even louder than the already shrieking gale. The ship was, for a moment, in the grip of some savage force which strained at it and made it reel.

There came a sound of footsteps on the deck and a halloo for Vanderbeck. Vanderbeck sat still.

The boots slithered down the ladder and the room was full of stillness and darkness and smoke. Lanson looked steadily at his glass.

"What's this?" said an ingratiating voice.

"Edward Lanson," said Vanderbeck.

"And who, may I politely ask, is Edward Lanson?"

"Hah!" said Vanderbeck. "Is he as good as that?" He laughed immoderately, and then, "Mate of the *Gloucester Maid*, or perhaps I should say captain since he had the command for five hours. A cool one, my friend, and worthy of your notice. He outlived all the men in his boat—"

"By taking their rations for himself?" hopefully.

Lanson's face was very stiff when he looked up. The thing in the dark, dripping cloak had slunk into a chair and his pointed brows were raised half amusedly, half cynically.

"You do not know everything, I see," said Lanson coldly.

"You see?" cried Vanderbeck. "You see? Twenty-one days in an open boat and he comes up with enough nerve to bait *you!*" Laughter shook him so that, pouring wine, the bottle chattered against the glass.

The Dark One was not disturbed. A leer of disbelief appeared upon his tapering face. "No man, my young mate, has any such remarkable power of self-sacrifice. I should know for, after all, I govern the lives of more than you suppose."

"But not mine," said Lanson, "and so I'll not be made to take the lie. Though I can't say that your good opinion is of any great importance to me."

Vanderbeck poured brandy all around in his enthusiasm. The Dark One was not at all pleased with what Vanderbeck had done.

"This was poorly thought of," he growled.

"What can I do? You rob me, one by one, of those I get to man

her. Even tonight the time of five is through and so they leave with you. And when I go to the work of lying-to, shall I desist because, wonder of wonders, he is not dead?"

"What else can he expect now?"

"You'll give him the same chance as others," said Vanderbeck. "He boards me and he is not afraid. Nor is he even afraid of *you!* And therefore *you* wish him ill. He'll have the same chance, I say."

The Dark One peered at Lanson with shifty eyes, but Lanson only sipped his brandy and did not blink. He despised the fellow from the nethermost reaches of his soul.

After a little, the Dark One got up and wandered about the room, opening the chests and regaining his good spirits by laughing at the contents. The sight of gold and gems reacted upon him like a colossal prank. Finally he took heed of the chronometer and sat down at the table again.

From inside the cloak he took a great dice cup and wrapping his long fingers over the edge, made the cubes within dance.

"Always *your* dice," said Vanderbeck. "As the years go by I trust you less and less."

"Hah, you think my dice are false? Here! Inspect them!"

"What good would that do?" said Vanderbeck. "But, this time, won't you use mine?"

"And be certain, then, that they are false? What a child you think me, Captain Vanderbeck. High man for first?"

"As you will," said Vanderbeck.

Promptly the Dark One rolled out four sixes and a five and sat there grinning while Vanderbeck took the great box and made the cubes rattle. When they fell upon the cloth they showed but small numbers.

"Shoot first, then," cried Vanderbeck, "and be damned to you. This night I'll pass the Cape, that I swear!"

"Have you not sworn too much already, perhaps?" said the Dark One.

Vanderbeck flushed.

The Dark One rolled the dice and got three fives. The remaining two presently bounced forth and one of them was a five. The last was also a mate to the rest.

"Five fives," he grinned. "Shoot five sixes now and pass the Cape. Yes, shoot five sixes or five aces and be free of it. Rattle them well, Captain Vanderbeck, for again you near land after long cruising. Fail and you are mine for seven years more."

Vanderbeck's eyes were over-

bright. "You've never been beaten. You have no concern. And it only amuses you to see another try. But here, I'll shoot and to hell with you."

The five dice leaped from the box, and when they had quieted they read two sixes a pair of fours and a deuce. Vanderbeck's hands shook when he laid the sixes aside and put the trio back into the cup. Thoroughly he shook them, savagely he threw them. Two more sixes came to view.

The Dark One was still grinning, self-assured. It amused him to see the moistness of Vanderbeck's hands and the tremble of the captain's lip.

Vanderbeck sent the die spinning round and round inside the cup and then, as though abandoning everything, let it fall to sight.

The Dark One began to laugh in a quiet, horrible sort of way. Vanderbeck's eyes were starting from their sockets and he appeared to be on the verge of insanity. Lanson whirled the brandy in the glass with small motions.

"Four sixes and a deuce won't do it I'm afraid," the Dark One said. "And so you're mine another seven years. But worry not. Again I'll bless your ship. She shall not founder. No, she'll carry you through the storm of winds which blow around the bottom of the world and we'll not meet again until your time has once more come. And so, good voyage to you, Captain Vanderbeck. Collect your crews upon the sea and send them on when their time is done. After all, you gave ship and self to me to win against these seas. You won, you see. And so, good-by and good sailing—"

"There's the matter of myself," said Lanson quietly. He dared not hope. "After all, I had no part in this and offered nothing to the sea but my own small strength. I come here only by chance and you have no right to keep me."

"Blast me, that's true," said Vanderbeck. "Much as I like you, Mr. Mate, I like you a shade too well to have you so condemned. Come, he'll have to have his chance."

The Dark One regarded them uncertainly for a little and then smiled in an oily fashion, slipping sideways into the chair once more.

"You really want to be given back to life, Edward Lanson?"

"Rather that than this."

"Then you do not like my service."

"I did not ask to enter it."

The Dark One's eyes shifted from the direct stare and he again produce the dice cup. "But let it be understood what you do. You shoot for your freedom and I for your soul. Is that correct?"

Lanson sat up a little straighter and took a hitch on his nerve. "Yes."

"High man shoots first."

And he rolled four sixes and a trey.

Lanson took the box. He stared for a while into its depths and then stirred it up. He tossed and got a hotch-potch of small ones.

The Dark One took the box again, rotating it slowly, all the while grinning triumphantly at Lanson. When the dice spewed forth there were three aces, a four and a deuce. His quick hands tossed the four and the deuce back, and when they leaped out again they were an ace and a trey. He placed the fourth ace with the first three and the die went round and round inside the cup while he enjoyed Lanson's strained face. Then it bounced to the board and teetered for a moment between an ace and a six. Then it fell, the ace on the side.

The Dark One shrugged. "Four

aces to beat, Edward Lanson. But even if you lose I am not such a hard master."

"I have not lost," said Lanson stubbornly.

He made the dice clatter in the cup. With a twitch of his wrist he scattered them on the green cloth. Two aces were there to be set aside.

"Go ahead, Edward Lanson. As you say, you have not lost."

Lanson rattled the three dice savagely. He spilled them, and when they had stopped, only one was found to be an ace.

"Keep right on," the Dark One laughed. "Not even yet have you lost."

Lanson shot him a contemptuous glare. The two remaining dice leaped about in the box and then bounced swiftly forth.

Vanderbeck leaped up so suddenly that he upset his brandy. "You see!" he cried. "You see! Two aces and that makes five! He's shot five aces and he's got you! Then you *can* be beaten. You can! And seven years from tonight when we again come near the Cape, we'll see!"

But a strange thing was happening to Lanson. The Dark One's evil face was beginning to fade. Vanderbeck was beginning to fade. The very tapestries of the room were growing indistinct.

The steward who waited in the door became only a bony thing and then a shadow and finally vanished althogether. The beams overhead grew as transparent as glass and even Vanderbeck's voice was drawing far off.

The Dark One was gone. The chests were gone. The table and the beef were gone. And then the deck under his feet was nothing and he began to fall.

The water was a bitter shock. A hungry wave towered up and dropped its tons of froth upon him. He came to the surface gasping and struck out wildly, encumbered by his clothes, smothered by the sea, deafened by the wind.

Close beside him something white was bobbing and he clung desperately to it. The solidity of the canvas-wrapped spar was reassuring, for he knew it as a sea anchor. More calmly now he worked himself up the line to the lifeboat's bow, discovering that he was only using one hand.

It took some time for him to get over the lunging gunwale, but at last he lay in the half-swamped boat.

Presently he pulled himself to the midship thwart and lay out flat upon it. There was something to which he had clung and now he gazed wonderingly upon it, finding that he still held a dice box.

Overhead the winds that howl around the bottom of the world tore spray straight out from the crests of every wave until a solid sheet of water was continually in the air. Back and forth, up and down, rolling, pitching and staggering, the lifeboat floundered through the gale. Waves licked hungry, white tongues at the gunwales.

Lanson got in the sea anchor and hung its be-ribboned canvas upon the mast as best he could, the while glancing about for any further sign of the spectral *Flying Dutchman*.

But the sea was clear and, after a little, he lashed the helm upon a northerly course. Gripping the dice box with a stubborn hand and kneeling on the buried bottom boards, Edward Lanson began to bail.

THE END

WARM, DARK PLACES

by H. L. GOLD

The little tailor couldn't understand the fanatic—but the hairy tramp knew his curses!

Illustrated by Edd Cartier

KAPLAN tried to make a gesture of impatience. It was impossible because his arms were piled high with clothing. He followed his wife's pointing finger and succeeded in shrugging contemptuously.

Clad in pathetic rags, the hairiest, dirtiest tramp in the world stood outside the plate-glass window of Kaplan's dry-cleaning store and eagerly watched the stubby, garment-laden figure as it waddled toward the bandbox cleaning vat.

"Him?" Kaplan echoed sarcastically. "A bum like him is going to drive us out of business? Do you mind if I am asking you what with, Mrs. Genius?"

"Like my mother told me," Mrs. Kaplan retorted angrily, "a book you can't tell by its covers. So, rags he's wearing and he's dirty, that means he can't have money? You don't read in the papers, I suppose. Blind beggars don't own apartment houses and chauffeurs, I suppose, and people on relief don't ride cars down to get their checks. Besides, such a feeling I get when I look at him—like when a mouse looks at a cat."

"*Pah!*" Kaplan broke in goodhumoredly. "Some foolishness."

"All right, Mr. Einstein, he's standing out there with a pencil and paper because somewhere else he ain't got to go."

"You think maybe you're wrong?" Kaplan almost snapped testily. "No. He's going to the Ritz for supper and he stopped in while he should have his dress suit pressed! Molly, a whole year you been annoying me with this lazy, no-good loafer. Ain't I got enough on my head as it is?"

Molly pursed her lips and went back to sewing buttons on a dress that hung from a hook. With his arms still loaded, Kaplan clambered up on the window platform, where the bandbox vat stood. How he ever had the strength of character to refrain from fondling his beautiful machine, Kaplan never understood. It really was a lovely thing: red, black and chromium, a masterpiece of a dry-cleaning machine that attracted school children and summer residents.

In spite of his confident attitude, Kaplan felt less certain of himself now. The moment he had stepped on the platform, the tramp darted to the very middle of the window.

Defiantly, Kaplan opened the door to the vat and tried to stuff in the garments without regard for scientific placement. They stuck, of course. Kaplan raised his head and glowered at the tramp, who craned and pressed his ugly, stubbled face against the polished glass, trying to peer into the open tank.

"Aha!" Kaplan muttered, when he saw his enemy's anxiety. "Now I got you!"

"I should tell you how my machine works so you can put me out of business? No! Go away!"

"Did you say something?" Molly asked ironically.

"No, no!" he said hastily. "So fat I'm getting—"

It was uncomfortable working in that position, but Kaplan shoved his slightly gross body between the opening and his audience. Straining from above and getting in his own way, he put the clothes in properly around the tumbler. Then he shut the door quickly and turned on the switch. The garments twirled slowly in the cleansing fluid.

Kaplan descended the stairs with an air of triumph.

That had happened every workday for a year, yet neither the little tailor nor his degraded foe had lost the original zest of the silent, bitter struggle. Once more Kaplan had defeated him! On his victory march back to the pressing machine, Kaplan allowed himself a final leer at the fallen.

But this time it was his face, not the tramp's, that slipped into anxiety. He stood trembling and watching his enemy's contented face, and fear lashed him.

The tramp was holding a large piece of brown grocery bag against the hitherto clean window with one hand. With the other he held a stump of pencil, which he used for checking unseen marks against whatever parts of the machine he could note from outside.

But what frightened Kaplan was his complacent satisfaction with his work. Usually he shook his head bewilderedly and wandered off, to reappear as eagerly at four thirty the next afternoon.

This time he didn't shake his head. He folded the dirty square of paper, stowed it away carefully in some hole in the lining of his miserable jacket, and strode—yes, *strode!*—away, nodding and grinning smugly.

Kaplan turned and looked unhappily at Molly. Luckily she was biting off a thread and had not noticed. If she hadn't been there, he knew he would have been useless. Now he had to put on a show of unconcern.

But his hands shook so violently that he banged down the iron almost hard enough to smash the machine, shot a vicious jet of steam through the suit, and the vacuum pedal, which dried the buck and garment, bent under the jab of his unsteady foot. He raised the iron and blindly walloped a crease in the pants.

Half an hour later, when Molly was arranging the garments for delivery, she let out a shriek:

"Ira! What are you doing—trying to ruin us by botch jobs?"

Kaplan groaned. He had started, properly enough, at the pleat near the waist; but a neat spiral crease ended at the side seam. If Molly had not caught the error, Mr. McElvoy, Cedarmere's dapper high-school principal, would have come raging into the store next day, wearing a pair of corkscrew pants.

"From morning to night," Kaplan moaned, "nothing but trouble! You and your foolishness—why can't I be rich and send you to Florida?"

"Oh, you want to get rid of me?" she shrilled. "Like a dog I work so we can save money, but you ain't satisfied! What more do you want—I should drive the truck?"

"It ain't a bad idea," he said wistfully. "How I hate to drive—"

He was almost quick enough to dodge the hanger. It was the first time he had ever regretted the imposing height of his bald, domelike head.

BLEARY-EYED, Kaplan drove up to the store twenty-five minutes early. Sometime, late at night, Molly had fallen into an exhausted sleep. But his weary ear and intense worry had kept him awake until dawn. Then he got out of bed and dazedly made breakfast.

He remembered the last thing she had shrieked at him:

"Five bankruptcies we've had, and not a penny we made on any of them! So once in your life you get an idea, we should borrow money and buy a bankbox, we should move to a little town where there ain't competition. So what do you do? Bums

you practically give your business to!"

There wasn't much literal truth in her accusation, yet Kaplan recognized its hyperbolic justice. By accepting the tramp as a tramp, merely because he wore dirty rags, Kaplan was encouraging some mysterious, unscrupulous conniving. Just what it might be, he couldn't guess. But what if the tramp actually had money and was copying the bandbox machine so he could find out where to buy one—

"A fat lot people care, good work, bad work, as long as it's cheap," Kaplan mumbled unhappily. "Don't Mr. Goodwin, the cheap piker, ride fifteen miles to that faker, Aaron Gottlieb, because it's a nickel cheaper?"

Kaplan opened the door of the Ford delivery truck and stepped out. "The loafer," he mumbled, "he could buy a bandbox, open a store, and drive me right out of business. Family he ain't got, a nice house he don't need—he could clean and press for next to—"

Kaplan had been fishing in his pocket for the key. When he looked up, his muttering rose to a high wail of fright.

"*You!* What do you want here?"

Early as it was, the tramp squatted cross-legged on the chill sidewalk as if he had been waiting patiently for hours. Now he raised himself to his feet and bowed his head with flattering respect.

"The magnificence of the sun shines full upon you," he intoned in a deep, solemn voice. "I accept that as an omen of good fortune."

Kaplan fumbled with the lock, trying to keep his bulk between the store and the tramp. How he could keep out his unwelcome guest, who seemed intent on entering, he had no idea. The tramp, however, folded his arms in dignity and waited without speaking further.

Unable to fumble convincingly any longer, Kaplan opened the door. It violated his entire conditioning, but he tried to close it on the tramp. Extremely agile, his visitor slipped through the narrow opening and stood quietly inside the store.

"All right, so you're in!" Kaplan cried in a shrill voice. "So now what?"

The unattractively fringed mouth opened. "I acknowledge your superior science," a low rumble stated.

"Hah?" was all Kaplan could extract from his flat vocal chords.

The tramp gazed longing at the bandbox machine before he turned, slowly and enviously, to Kaplan.

"I have solved the mystery of the automobile, the train, the ship—yea, even the airplane. These do not befuddle me. They operate because of their imprisoned atoms, those infinitely small entities whom man has contrived to enslave. That one day they will revolt, I shall not argue."

Kaplan searched, but he could find no answer. How could he? The tramp spoke English of a sort. Individually most of the words made sense; together, they defied interpretation.

"Electric lights," the tramp went on, "are obviously dismembered parts of astral sheaths, which men torment in some manner to force them to assume an even more brilliant glow. This sacrilegious use of the holy aura I shall not denounce now. It is with your remarkably specialized bit of science that I am concerned."

"For science, it don't pay so good," Kaplan replied with a nervous attempt at humor.

"Your science is the most baffling, least useful in this accursed materialistic world. What is the point of

deliberately cleansing one's outer garments while leaving one's soul clad in filth?"

To Kaplan, that gave away the game. Before that the tramp had been mouthing gibberish. This was something Kaplan could understand.

"You wouldn't like to clean garments for people, I suppose?" he taunted slyly.

Evidently the tramp didn't hear Kaplan. He kept his eyes fixed on the bandbox and began walking toward it in a dazed way. Kaplan couldn't drive him away; despite his thinness, the tramp looked strong. Besides, he was within his legal rights.

"I have constructed many such devices in the year since I returned to the depraved land of my birth. In Tibet, the holy land of wisdom, I was known to men as Salindrinath, an earnest student. My American name I have forgotten."

"What are you getting at?" Kaplan demanded.

Salindrinath spoke almost to himself: "Within the maws of these machines I placed such rags as I possess. I besought the atoms to cleanse for me as they cleanse for you. Lo! My rags came to me with dirt intact, and a bit of machinery grime to boot."

He wheeled on Kaplan.

"And why should they not?" he roared savagely. "What man does not know that atoms have powerful arms but not fingers with which to pluck dirt from garments?"

As one actor judging the skill of another, Kaplan had to admit the tramp's superiority. How a man could so effectively hide the simple urge to make a profit, Kaplan envied without understanding. The tramp wore a look of incredibly painful yearning.

"Pity me! Long ago should I have gone to my next manifestation. I have accomplished all possible in this miserable skin; another life will bestow Nirvana upon me. Alone of all the occult, this senseless wizardry torments me. Give me your secret—"

Kaplan recoiled before the fury of the plea. But he was able to conceal his confusion by pretending to walk backward politely to the workshop.

"*Give* it to you? I got to make a living, too."

Beneath his outwardly cool exterior, Kaplan was desperately scared. What sort of strategy was this? When one man wants to buy out another, or drive him to the wall, he beats around the bush, of course. But he is also careful to drop hints and polite threats. This kind of idiocy, though! It didn't make sense. And that worried Kaplan more than if it had, for he knew the tramp was far from insane.

"Do you aspire to learn of me? Eagerly shall I teach you in return for your bit of useless knowledge! What say you?"

"Nuts," Kaplan informed him.

Salindrinath pondered this reply. "Then let my scientific training prove itself. Since you seem unwilling to explain—"

"Unwilling! Hah, if you only knew!"

"Mayhap you will consent to cleanse my sacred garments in my presence. Then shall I observe, without explanation. With a modicum of introspection, I can discover its principle. Yes?"

Kaplan picked up the heavy flat bat with which he banged creases into clothing. Its weight and utilitarian shape tempted him; the lawlessness of the crime appalled his kindly soul.

"What you got in mind?"

"Why, simply this—let me watch your machine cleanse my vestments."

Regretfully Kaplan put down his weapon. His soft red lips, he felt sure, were a thin white line of controlled rage.

"Ain't it enough you want to put me out of business? Must I give you a free dry cleaning too? Cleaning fluid costs money. If I cleaned your clothes, I couldn't clean a pair of overalls with it. Maybe you want me to speak plainer?"

"It was but a simple request."

"Some simple request! Listen to him— Even for ten dollars I wouldn't put your rags in my bandbox!"

"What, pray, is your objection?" the Salindrinath asked humbly.

"You can ask? Such filth I have never seen. Shame on you!"

Salindrinath gazed down at his tatters. "Filth? Nay, it is but honest earth. What holy man fears the embrace of sacred atoms?"

"Listen to him," Kaplan cried. "Jokes! You got atoms on you, you shameless slob, the same kind like on a pig—"

Now the ragged one recoiled. This he did with one grimy hand clutching at his heart.

"You dare!" he howled. "You compare my indifference to mere external cleanliness with SWINE? Oh, profaner of all things sacred, dabbler in satanic arts—" He strangled into silence and goggled fiercely at Kaplan, who shrank back. "You thing perhaps I am unclean?"

"Well, you ain't exactly spotless," Kaplan jabbered in fright.

"But that you should compare me with the swine, the gross materialist of the mire!" Salindrinath stood trembling. "If you believe my vestments to be unclean, wait, bedraggler of my dignity. *Wait!* You shall discover the vestments of your cleanly, externally white and shining trade to be loathsome—loathsome and vile beyond words!"

"Some ain't so clean," Kaplan granted diplomatically.

The shabby one turned on his rundown heel and strode to the door.

"The garments of your respected customers will show you the real meaning of filth. And I shall return soon, when you are duly humbled!"

Kaplan shrugged at the furiously slammed door.

"A nut," he told himself reassuringly. "A regular lunatic."

But even that judicious pronouncement did not comfort him. He was too skilled in bargaining not to recognize the gambits that Salindrinath had shrewdly used—disparagement of the business, the attempt to wheedle information, the final threat. All were unusually cockeyed, and thus a bit difficult for the amateur to discern, but Kaplan was not fooled so easily.

He sorted his work on the long receiving table. While waiting for the pressing machine to heat up, he began brushing trouser cuffs and sewing on loose or missing buttons.

LUCKILY Kaplan steamed out Mrs. Jackson's fall outfit first. That delayed the shock only a few moments, but later he was to look back on those free minutes with cosmic longing.

He came to Mr. McEvoy's daily suit. Nobody could accuse the neat principal of anything but the most finicking immaculacy. Yet when Kaplan got through stitching up a cuff and put his hand in a pocket to brush out the usual fluff—

"*Yeow!*" he yelled, snatching out his hand.

For a long while Kaplan stood

shuddering, his fingers cold with revulsion. Then, cautiously, he ran his hand over the outside of the pocket. He felt only the flat shape of the lining.

"Am I maybe going out of my mind?" he muttered. "Believe me, with everything on my shoulders, and that nut besides, it wouldn't surprise me."

Slowly he inserted the tips of his fingers into the pocket. Almost instantly something globular and clammily smooth crept into the palm of his furtively exploring hand.

Kaplan shouted in disgust, but he wouldn't let go. Clutching the monstrosity was like holding a round, affectionate oyster that kept trying to snuggle deeper into his palm. Kaplan wouldn't free it, though. Grimly he yanked his hand out.

Somehow it must have sensed his purpose. Before he could snatch it out of its refuge, the cold, clammy thing *squeezed* between his fingers with a repulsively fierce effort—

Kaplan determinedly kept fumbling around after it, until his mind began working again. He hadn't felt any head on it, but that didn't mean it couldn't have teeth somewhere in its apparently featureless body. How could it eat without a mouth? So the little tailor stopped daring the disgusting beast to bite him.

He stood still for a moment, gaping down at his hand. Though it was empty, he still felt a sensation of damp coldness. From his hand he stared back to Mr. McElvoy's suit. The pockets were perfectly flat. He couldn't detect a single bulge.

The idea nauseated him, but he forced himself to explore all the pockets.

"Somebody," he whispered savagely when he finished, "is all of a sudden a wise guy—only he ain't so funny."

He stalked, rather waddlingly, to the telephone, ripped the receiver off the hook, barked a number at the operator. Above the *burr* of the bell at the other end he could hear the gulp of his own angry swallowing.

"Hello," a husky feminine voice replied. "Is that you, darling?"

"Mrs. McElvoy?" he rasped, much too loudly.

The feminine voice changed, grew defensive. "Well?"

"This is Kaplan the tailor. Mrs. McElvoy"—his rasp swelled to a violent shout—"such a rotten joke I have never seen in eighteen years I been in this business. What am I—a dope your husband should try funny stuff on?" The words began running together. "Listen, maybe I ain't classy like you, but I got pride also. So what if I work for a living? Ain't I—"

"Whatever are you talking about?" Mrs. McElvoy asked puzzledly.

"Your husband's pants, that's what! Such things he's got in his pockets, I wouldn't be seen dead with them!"

"Mr. McElvoy has his suits cleaned after wearing them only once," she retorted frigidly.

"So, does that mean he can't keep dirty things in his pockets?"

"I'm sorry you don't care to have our trade," Mrs. McElvoy said, obviously trying to control her anger. "Mr. Gottlief has offered to call for them every morning. He's also five cents cheaper. Good day!"

In reply to the bang that hurt his ear, Kaplan slammed down the receiver. The moment he turned to march off, the bell jangled. Viciously he grabbed up the receiver.

"Hello . . . darling?" a deep feminine voice asked.

"Mrs. McElvoy?" he roared.

For several seconds he listened to a strained, bitter silence. Then:

"IRA!" his wife shrilled in outrage.

He hung up hastily and, trembling, he went back to his pressing machine.

"Will I get it now," he moaned. "Everything happens to me. If I don't starve for once, so all kinds of trouble flops in my lap. First I lose my best customer—I should only have a thousand like him, I'd be on easy street—and then I make a little mistake. But go try to tell Molly I made a mistake. Married twenty years, and she acts like I was a regular lady-killer—"

Kaplan's pressing production rose abruptly from four suits an hour to nine. But that was because no cuffs were brushed, no pockets turned inside out, no buttons stitched or replaced. He banged down the iron, slashed the suits with steam, vacuumed them hastily, batted the creases, which had to be straight the first time or not at all. He knew there would be kicks all that week, but he couldn't do anything about it.

The door opened. Kaplan raised a white face. It wasn't his wife, though. Fraulein, Mrs. Sampter's refugee maid, clumped over to him and shoved a pair of pants in his hands.

"Goot morgen," she said pleasantly. "Herr Sompter he vants zhe pockets new. You make soon, no?"

Kaplan nodded dumbly. Without thinking of the consequences, he stuffed his hand in the pocket to note the extent of the damage.

"Eee—YOW!" he howled. "What kind of customers have I got all of a sudden? Take it away, Fraulein! With crazy people I don't want to deal!"

Fraulein's broad face wrinkled bewilderedly. She took back the pants and ran her hands through the pockets.

"Crazy people—us? Maybe you haf got zhe temperature?"

"Such things in pockets! Phooey on practical jokers! Go away—"

"You just vait till Mrs. Sompter about this hears." And stuffing the pants under her arm, Fraulein marched out angrily.

Despite his revulsion, it took Kaplan only a few moments to grow suspicious. One previously dignified customer might suddenly have become a practical joker, but not two. Something scared him even more than that. Fraulein had put her hands in the pockets! Apparently she had not felt anything at all.

"Who's crazy?" Kaplan whispered frightenedly. "Me or them?"

Warily he approached the worktable. Mr. McElvoy was neat, but Mr. Rich was such a bug on cleanliness that even his dirty suits were immaculate, and his pockets never contained lint. That was the suit Kaplan edged up to.

THE INSTANT Molly opened the door she began shrieking.

"You loafer! You no-good masher! I call up to tell you I don't feel good, so maybe I won't have to work today. 'Hello, darling,' I say, so who else could it be but your own wife? No—it's Mrs. McElvoy!"

Despite her red-eyed glare, she seemed to recognize a subtle change in him. His plump face was grave and withdrawn, hardened in the fire of spiritual conflict. Instead of claiming it was a mistake, which she had been expecting and would have pounced on, he merely turned back to his pressing machine.

She got panicky. "Ira! Ain't you going to even say you weren't

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thinking? Don't tell me you . . . you *love* Mrs. McElvoy—"

"You know I don't, Molly," he replied quietly, without looking up.

Slowly she took her fists off her hips and unstraddled her firmly planted feet. She knew she was helpless against his passive resistance.

"Ira, I don't feel so good. Is it all right if I don't work?"

"I'll get along somehow," he said gently. "Stay home till you feel better, darling. I'll manage."

For several minutes she watched him work. He had a new method of brushing pockets. Although she realized it was new to him, he appeared to have it pat. He pulled the pockets inside out with a hooked wire, brushed them, stuffed them back with a stick of clean wood.

"Ain't it easier to do it by hand?" she asked helpfully.

When he shook his head abstractedly, she shrugged, kissed him uncomfortably, and walked hesitantly toward the door. She paused there.

"You sure *you* feel all right, Ira? You won't need me?"

"I'll get by, sweetheart. Don't you worry about me."

He displayed no sign of relief when she left, for he felt none. He had connected the hideous things in his customers' pockets with the tramp's threat. Somehow Salindrinath had managed to put them there, and neutralizing their effect on him had been Kaplan's problem. The hooked wire and the stick solved it. Therefore he no longer had a problem. He had observed that when the pockets were turned out, the small globes vanished. Where they went, he had no idea, but that wasn't important.

He locked the store at ten thirty to make his calls, and again at twelve, when he went home for lunch and to see how Molly felt. She was in bed, outwardly looking fine, but so baf-

fled by his changed character that her slight organic headache had become hysterically monumental.

He went back to work. Now that he had cleverly sidestepped the tramp's strategy, nothing delayed or upset the care or tempo of his work. Twice he forgot and put his hand in breast pockets to straighten the lining. The sensation nauseated him, but he merely snatched out his hand and continued working with his new method.

At four thirty he gathered the garments to be dry cleaned.

"Now the bum'll come around so he can make fun," Kaplan stated doggedly. "Will he be surprised!"

Halfway to the bandbox machine, he heard the door click. Glancing casually at Salindrinath, Kaplan walked on. The tramp closed the door and folded his arms regally.

"Fool," he said in a cold tone, "do you bow to my wish to know?"

The triumphant leer broke out against Kaplan's will. "You think maybe you got me scared, you pig?" he blurted, now that the leer had involuntarily started him off wrong. "How much it scares me don't amount to a row of beans! You and your things in pockets—phooey!"

Salindrinath drew back. His regal, stubbled face slid into a gape of amazement.

"Yeah, you and your things don't bother me," Kaplan pursued, his mocking grin broader than before. "You can all go to hell!"

"Pig? Hell?" Salindrinath's ugly black jaw stuck out viciously. "Do you condemn me to your miserable, unimaginative hell? Know then, swine of a materialist, that my dwellers in dark places are the height of torment to money-grubbers. They shall roost where they dismay you most! When you cringe and beg of me to share your pitiful science, crawl to my holy shack at the landing on the creek—"

Kaplan stuffed the garments into the bandbox and thumbed his nose at the ragged figure striding savagely away from the store.

"A fine case he's got!" he gloated. "I'll come crawling to him when Hitler kicks out the Germans and takes back the Jews. Not before. Do I annoy anybody? If I can work hard and make a living, that's all I ask. He wants to buy a bandbox and open a store here? So let him. But why should I have to tell him how to run me out of business? What some people won't do when they see a business that's making money!" He shook his head sadly.

KAPLAN CLOSED the bandbox door, turned the switch, and climbed down from the window platform. Just when he sat down at the sewing machine, Miss Robinson, the nice young kindergarten teacher came in.

"Hello, Mr. Kaplan," she sang with a smile. "Isn't it the loveliest day? Not too cold, though you can feel winter coming on, and it makes you want to take long brisk walks. Isn't it grand having our little town all to ourselves again? But I suppose it's better for you when the summer visitors are here—"

"How much difference can it make?" He shrugged indifferently. "In the summer I work hard like a horse so I can take it easy in the winter and get strong to work like a horse in the summer. If I got enough to eat and pay my bills, that's all I ask."

"I suppose that's all anyone really wants," she agreed eagerly. "Is my suit ready? I feel so chilly in these silk dresses—"

"It's been ready for two days. I made it quick so you wouldn't go around catching colds. Like new it

looks, Miss Robinson. For my nicest customers I can do a better job than anybody else."

He took down her suit and pinned it into a bag so she could carry it easily.

"You certainly do," she enthused. "I'll pay you now. You probably can use the money, with all your summer trade gone."

"Whenever you want. People like you don't stick poor tailors."

He took the five-dollar bill she handed him and fumbled in his pocket for change.

"Mr. Kaplan!" she cried, staring anxiously at his goggling face. "Don't you feel well?"

"Ain't I a dope?" he laughed unconvincingly. "Needles I put in my pocket, I get so flustered when pretty girls come in—"

But he had whipped out his hand with such violence that the entire contents of his pocket spilled out on the floor. For some reason this seemed to please him. He stooped ponderously, picked up everything, and counted change into her hand.

She smiled, quite flattered, and left.

But the moment the door closed behind her, Kaplan's weak grin soured. He hadn't pushed his pocket lining back yet. Instead, he patted the outside of his clothes, as if he were frisking himself.

"What have I got now?" he breathed incredulously, inching the fingers of his left hand into his jacket pocket.

He touched something round, hairless and warm, that skittered from his fingertips and dug irritably against his thigh. And there it pulsed against his skin, beating like a disembodied heart—

Thurston, the Seids' chauffeur, came in and picked up everything the family had there. Kaplan didn't mind, for it saved him a five-mile trip. But the chauffeur insisted on paying.

Kaplan reached toward his pocket for change. Abruptly he stopped and let his hand dangle limply. As if telepathic, all the vermin in his pockets had lunged around wildly, to avoid his touch.

"Couldn't you pay later?" he begged. "Does it have to be right now?"

"The madame instructed me to pay," Thurston replied distantly.

Kaplan sighed and looked down at his pocket wistfully, until he remembered that he had put his money on the pressing-machine table. And that, of course, took care of this particular problem.

But Mrs. Ringer, Miss Tracy, young Fox, Mrs. Redstone; and Mr. Davis; who had got off early—all came for their work, and all wanted to pay.

"What is this—a plot?" he muttered. "They must think I'm out of my head, keeping money on a table instead of in my pocket. Can I go on like this? And you, you things, you! Do you *have* to beat like that? Can't you lay quiet and not bother me?"

But he could feel them burrowing restlessly or pulsing contentedly against his skin. Kaplan grew anxious. He couldn't feel them from the outside. Inside, though, they certainly existed, moving around like mice, pulsing like naked, detached hearts.

"It's just this suit," he said. "After all, how many suits can the dirty crook fill with these things?"

He grabbed up an old pair of pants he kept around as a dry change in wet weather. Before putting it on, he tentatively explored a pocket.

A warm ball, furred like a headless, wingless, unutterably loathsome

bat, crept affectionately into his palm and pulsed there, clearly enjoying the warmth of his hand. He gritted his teeth and tried to haul it out. It slipped frenziedly through his fingers.

Though it was almost time to make his deliveries, Kaplan locked the store and shopped for a bus driver's change machine. He couldn't find one in the village, of course. Nor would it have taken care of bills, anyhow.

Kaplan loaded the truck and began his rounds. Not everybody tried to pay. It only seemed like that. Eventually, he hoped, his customers might get used to seeing him with all his money clutched tightly in his hand. He knew they wouldn't.

And that only solved the money question, though it certainly would encourage robbers. Now if he could only find a place to keep his handkerchiefs, cigarettes, matches, keys, letters, toothpicks—

Dazed and exhausted, Kaplan drove into the garage at home. He shut off the motor, removed the key, turned out the lights, and closed the doors. When he went to lock the small side door, he had to turn his pockets inside out with the hooked wire and pick the key out of everything that fell on the ground.

Molly had staggered out of bed and was moving gingerly around the kitchen, careful not to jolt her head into aching again. Kaplan put all his money, keys, cigarettes, and matches on the end table in the living room. He kept his arms stiffly away from his body. He knew that the slightest touch would send the vermin scuttling around in his pockets—

Washing his hands meticulously with sandsoap, he couldn't bear the sight of his face in the mirror. One glance had been more than enough. He had seen a scared, white blur—

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Molly, he knew, was certain to note his expression and ask embarrassing questions.

"I thought I looked bad," she said when he flopped limply into his chair. "Boy, do you look terrible! What is it, Ira?"

"What isn't it?" he grumbled. "Everybody—"

He broke off. He had suddenly realized how it would sound to complain that all his customers insisted on paying.

Almost immediately after eating, he felt like going to bed. He had not slept the night before; the newspaper was boring; his favorite radio comedian sounded like an undertaker who had just heard a good one.

"So soon?" Molly asked anxiously as he yawned with intellectual deliberation and stood up. "Ira, if you're sick, why don't you—"

"Doctors!" he snarled. "What can they do for me?"

But his false yawn had made her mouth gape, and that, of course, was catching. His next was considerably better, for it was real.

"Can I help it if I'm tired?" he asked. "It wouldn't hurt you to get some sleep either."

He stumbled off to bed.

When Molly came in, she had to cover him. He tried not to fling off the blankets, and the effort was killing. Hundreds of pulsing vermin had instantly snuggled against him when he was covered. With blind, repulsive hunger for his warmth, they burrowed and beat against his skin, until he slid the blanket off and lay shivering in the cold.

"Ira," she whispered. "Do you want to catch pneumonia? Keep covered."

He pretended to be asleep. But Kaplan was not fated to sleep any more, though he inched the blanket off again. The second he heard her breathing regularly, he sneaked into the bathroom and cut off the pocket of his pajama jacket.

Back in bed again, he was much too cold to sleep. So he dressed silently and went downstairs. He picked up his keys from the end table and went out to the car.

Riding through the deserted streets toward the creek, he felt dangerously near tears. His pride had never been so battered—nor had he ever before done what he was now about to do.

"It's like taking the bread out of my mouth and giving it to him," Kaplan moaned, "but what else can I do? Already people think I'm crazy, walking around with everything in my hands like a regular school kid. If people don't respect me, so my business goes bust anyhow. It's the same thing if I lose my customers or they go to somebody else."

He stopped at the shack near the landing on the creek. After only a moment of hesitation, he knocked tentatively at the door.

"Enter, tailor!" a deep, majestic voice called out.

KAPLAN didn't wonder or care how the tramp had known he was there. He threw open the door and sneaked in miserably.

"All right," he said defeatedly to the ragged figure squatting on the floor. "I'll tell you anything you want to know, only get these things out of my pockets."

The tramp stared up at Kaplan, and his ugly, stubbled face looked far more unhappy than the tailor's.

"You come too late," he moaned. "My quest for knowledge forced me to injure a living being. I am now"—his head drooped—"no longer a yogin. I have been stripped of my

powers. You must live with the curse I placed upon you, for I cannot help you now. Please forgive me! That can lighten my punishment—"

"Forgive you?" Kaplan wheezed. "First you try to drive me out of business. Then you stick me with these . . . these things that are almost as filthy as you are. And now you can't help me. You can go to hell."

He ran out so quickly that he didn't observe the tramp's sudden vanishing. Raving with rage, he raced home and left the car at the curb. He undressed swiftly, but when he approached the bed, he did so with the utmost caution.

He climbed aboard gingerly, careful not to wake his wife, and slid under the covers. Instantly he flung them off.

"Everything else ain't bad enough," he groaned. "No, like an animal I got to sleep uncovered!"

As he had done the night before, he lay awake until the sky lightened. By that time he felt sure he had worked out a solution.

"If I can do it with pajamas," he breathed hopefully, "is there any reason it shouldn't happen with regular clothes?"

And getting up noiselessly, Kaplan gathered his things and carried them to the bathroom. He took a pair of scissors out of the medicine chest. This time, when he closed the mirror door, the glimpse of his face pleased him. He stopped to examine it. Triumph glinted from the warm, brown eyes, and his soft, gentle mouth was curved in a real smile.

"You got him licked, Ira Kaplan!" he whispered. "You ain't altogether a dope—"

Working with the speed of skill, he ripped out all the pockets of his suit. To make absolutely certain, though, he also tore away the linings of his jacket and vest.

Still wearing his pajamas in the kitchen, he squeezed orange juice, made coffee, and ate breakfast. For the first time in two days he actually felt hungry. He stuffed away half a dozen cream-cheese and smoked-salmon sandwiches on *bagels* and drank another cup of coffee.

"Already I feel like another man," he declared. "Now all I got to do is get dressed and go to work. Molly can carry the money and letters. Cigarettes and matches? *Pooh*, that's easy! I'll just keep a pack in the car, one in the store, another at home. Nothing to it!"

He dressed slowly, enjoying the sensation, for he knew that he no longer would feel the revolting creatures pulsing, crawling, moving around like mice against his skin—

"*Heh!*" he cackled. "Is Ira Kaplan smart or ain't he?"

Standing on his bare feet, he tied his tie, then patted the places where his pockets used to be. He even dared to put a hand inside. And of course he felt nothing—absolutely nothing that might snuggle lovingly into his palm or scuttle hideously from his fingers.

"Licked!" he gloated. "Is that tramp licked or ain't he licked?"

He put on his shoes swiftly, slipped into his jacket and topcoat, clapped his hat on his bald head. He strode to the door.

"*Molly!*" he screamed.

His feet shrank from warm, pulsing vermin that nestled cozily in the toe of each shoe. Under his hat a clammily cold, pulsing thing crawled around furiously, struggling to escape the warmth of his hairless scalp—

THE END.

PROWLER

by FRANCES HALL

In the night, in the moonless night when no wind is blowing
And the house holds its breath, there is dread swift-growing
In the heart, in the stomach, in the shrinking thighs.
It bursts like a bombshell behind shut eyes.
It shivers down the spine; it drums in the ears;
It is born of the ancient unnamable fears.
How it mocks and turns and twists and jeers!

In the night, in the silent night when no soul is stirring,
The inscrutable turns to a ghastly purring.
With a sleek black tongue it has licked its paws.
With a love of torture it has flexed its claws.
Its muscles tense and its hackles rise.
Who senses it makes no outcries
For the power of death is in its eyes.

In the night, in the awesome night is the time for knowing
That black beast waits with its great fangs glowing.

THE TOMMYKNOCKER

By THOMAS CALVERT McCLARY

THE TOMMYKNOCKER

by THOMAS CALVERT McCLARY

● "If wishes were horses"—but beggars might get some bad saddlesores!

Illustrated by Gilmore

CENTRAL PARK was filled with gay laughter and spring sunshine, but Amos Johnson was filled with gloom. They were going to tunnel through the park, and they would rip up the very rock he sat upon.

That rock had meant a lot to Amos Johnson. It had been his refuge. It was the place he sneaked off to when the drab monotony of existence was squeezing him into a complete nonentity.

He could talk to that rock. He could tell it the things he really thought and dreamed. Not that he did much of either of recent years. He did not dare to. He had learned that thoughts and dreams can make a man very unhappy.

Now they were going to blast that rock and cart it away. It made him acutely conscious that at forty-three years, life had passed him by. His life was summed up in the rapid figures of his bookkeeper's ledger.

Johnson looked up suddenly to find a very odd stranger regarding him. His blue eyes looked very human and quite mad. He was short and round-bellied. A rubbery mouth stretched nearly to pointed ears. He toyed with two small stones, one red and one black.

"You choose an oddly hard place to sit, my friend," the stranger gestured.

Amos glared, but it appeared more like a nearsighted squint. "Why shouldn't I? This is practically my rock."

"Ho!" the man gusted laconically, and sat down. "Your family, perhaps, once owned this stretch of parkland?"

Amos snorted. "My family didn't own the time of day! But they were people. They owned themselves."

Obviously, the little man could see, Amos was a rather soured and unimportant bookkeeper. A little stooped, a little fat and dumpy, from lack of exercise, his brows creased with eyestrain. Probably very good at his job, and enslaved by commerce almost to the point of absolutism.

The stranger squeezed the two stones and they disappeared with a click. "I take it this rock had something to do with your family's freedom?"

"With *my* freedom!" Amos corrected. He kicked savagely at a pebble.

The man nodded with sympathetic interest. "You've lost it?"

"Practically," Amos growled. "They're blowing it up! What is left of it."

"You or the rock?"

Amos looked at the man grimly. "*Both.* What's a rock, or a man, to this machine-mad world?"

The stranger reached into the air and the two stones were in his hand again. "I've done a deal of specu-

lating on that myself, today. Hm-m-m. *A great deal.*"

Amos' tones grew less edged. "When I was a kid, I used to play at this rock. I was a robber chief, a smuggler, a miner, a two-gun Texas Ranger, all on this very spot."

"A boy of imagination and daring," the man commended.

Amos jerked a finger to a spot above a small, bush-hidden cave entrance. "You'll see an 'A. J.' and a mailed fist carved up there. My warning to the world to stay off my domain." He laughed sharply. "Mister, I can't even keep the cockroaches out of my flat!"

"Persistent creatures," the stranger commented. He examined the crude, weather-washed carving over the cave. "Early memories mean a great deal to us."

Amos offered a ten-cent pack of cigarettes. "This rock means more than just memories, mister. This rock has been my friend."

The man started and coughed sharply. "*Friend?*"

"Yes sir." Amos looked self-consciously defiant. "Ever hear of tommyknockers?"

"Ho!" the man chuckled. "I have indeed."

"They're the little fellows who rumble in the earth," Amos explained. "Miners won't go down in a mine that hasn't got tommyknockers talking in it. Or maybe you don't believe that?"

"Oh, I believe it most thoroughly!" the man said hastily. "I have known a few . . . ah . . . miners."

Amos looked more friendly. "Well, it sounds kind of daffy, sitting here in the middle of New York. But if you know how to twist a loose rock in that cave, you can climb down to a big cavern below."

"And there are tommyknockers down there?"

"One," Amos said. "At least, he's there to me. Funny thing about these little men. They can't do you any good unless you believe in them. But they can give you hell if you don't!"

The man smiled brightly. "Has yours done you any good?"

Amos deliberated. "In a way. I've got a job, a home, a good wife, I guess, as wives go. I didn't get laid off during the depression. And that's all come from this rock. But it's more than that."

"Ah?" the stranger said curiously.

Amos nodded. "Sometimes when I thought I was going to bust and yell from nothing ever happening, I'd come up and listen to this tommyknocker. You see, I couldn't jump the traces. I couldn't even think too much for fear I would. And I had Abby—she's my wife—to think about."

The man looked peculiarly intent. "Did this tommyknocker ever tell you anything helpful?"

"No-o-o-o," Amos admitted, "but he made me feel better. I could talk to him like a friend." He looked down at his feet. "I don't have many friends . . . I mean, the kind you can talk to."

He made a gesture of sudden confidence. "Mister, I've written the story of this rock!"

The man batted his eyes. By some intangible change, Amos looked like a real individual. He almost looked important. "Is there a story?" the man asked.

Amos chuckled. "Treasure Island is just a dud beside this! Why this rock has killed over two hundred men, and saved or made ninety-four!"

The stranger smiled. "You write a lot?"

Amos colored. Authors were

something slightly mysterious and vastly screwy to his set. "No. This is just a hobby. I've been working on it twenty years."

The man sucked his lip. He produced eleven differently colored stones and juggled them. He spread his hand upside down and the stones vanished. He said: "If a tommy-knocker's friendly, you can ask a favor of him. But you have to ask exactly what you want."

Amos grinned, but suddenly he felt old and unimportant again. "Lord, mister, I wouldn't know what to ask any more. I used to—but I wouldn't, now."

"Perhaps a fortune?" the stranger suggested.

Amos shrugged. "What would I do with it? We had a sweepstakes ticket once. Me and the wife talked for months about winning. We thought of everything we could do. We decided I'd quit my job and we'd take a trip around the world. Then do you know what we found out?"

The man regarded him closely.

Amos snorted. "Neither of us wanted to make the trip! Besides I wouldn't know what to do with myself if I quit work!"

"Perhaps a smaller ambition," the man smiled.

Amos thought. "Well, I guess money, at that. I'd just like to have for a time all I could spend on things I've never done. You know, things you don't have to have, like fancy clothes, theaters, night clubs, flowers. The missis likes flowers a lot."

"How much would that be?"

Amos had to calculate. He had never had that much, even for a night, out of the meager savings of thirty-two dollars a week. He thought of what some of the lucky horse players in the office had said.

"I don't know. I guess a hundred dollars a day."

He grinned as the idea opened up. "Yup, that's what I'd ask. A hundred a day, and I'd spend every dime on things that didn't count! Then there'd be no fight with the missis over what to save, or how to save it."

"You've had that experience?"

Amos laughed. "We almost had a divorce over that sweepstakes ticket that didn't win!"

The stranger's eyes danced. "Every man to his own taste! Well, sir, I've enjoyed talking with you. I have, perhaps, a deeper attachment for this rock even than you."

He bowed and passed around the rock. Amos climbed to the top to watch him go. He could see the long walks and rolling lawns for some distance. But the stranger had vanished.

"Funny where he went," Amos mused. "Friendly cuss."

He glanced at the lichen-speckled outcropping beneath his feet. His jaw went truculent. "Too damned bad they can't leave even a rock! Look at it, covered with hearts and names and dates. What's a tunnel going to mean to anybody?"

II.

IT HAD BEEN the most ordinary Monday possible. Amos came in at ten minutes to nine. He was well at work by the time the adding machines and computators began rattling.

There was a new girl down in Miss McElroy's place, her eyes radiant with the excitement of a dawning career. Miss McElroy had looked like that when she came there, eighteen years before. She had looks and beaux and offers of mar-

riage, then. She had nothing except a lonely pinched face and a dread of losing her job, toward the last.

The younger workers hadn't known why she cried when that meager legacy of a farm and four hundred dollars a year took her to a New Yorker's Siberia in the Middle West. But the older ones had. If Amos drank, he would have gotten drunk that day. *He* knew how she felt!

He obliterated the thought, as he did everything which would distract him from his monotonous existence. He was putting his pencils and pens in a neat row and dusting his desk well after quitting time when Flanagan came down the room.

Flanagan said, "Johnson, you got change of five? Cashier's gone."

Amos knew very well that he did not. Only by diligent starvation had he managed to acquire the two single dollars in his pocket. But he reached into his money for affect. He extended his hand without really looking in it.

"Nope. Only two singles," he said with the air of a man who usually has change for five or ten.

Flanagan stared very peculiarly. Amos looked in his hand. He felt hot and cold and dizzy. A hundred-dollar bank note was folded neatly atop the singles.

He wheezed: "I don't know how it got there!"

Flanagan grinned with new-born friendliness. "Maybe it flew in!" He winked wisely, and went away chuckling.

Amos sat down and blinked at the bank note. He felt it. He examined it carefully. He looked at it under a magnifying glass. He called the night crew at the bank and checked the serial number.

He examined his trousers. They were his own, well worn ones, without a doubt. He went back over the day methodically. He had once read of a man who put his wallet into another man's pocket by mistake. But Amos hadn't even lunched at the crowded hour that day.

He examined the note all over again. He thought about that conversation at the rock the day before. He gave a foolish grin, as people will about a coincidence they half believe and yet know better than to attach importance to. Odd, though. Damned odd! How had the note gotten into his pocket?

He realized with a sudden shock that the money was *his*. The knowledge obliterated even surprise. It was like a big gong booming that one thought inside his head. It left no room for any other thought or feeling. He could do what he wanted with that bank note! Excitement popped through his body like an electric sign: a peculiar mono-excitement, like that which might come from a world-chaos, with all its complexities, but in which the mind was completely gripped by the sight of a small light, or a single sound. There were so many things he was going to do with that money that he could not think clearly of a single one!

He began to feel apprehensive. They murdered people for less than this! Maybe somebody else knew he had the money. His eyes swept the empty shadows. He made an elaborate gesture of dropping his pencil and bending over for it. It gave him a view beneath nearby desks. Very casually, he made a trip to the files. He pretended to examine something in the shadows while he nervously pinned the bank note inside the lining of his coat.

Amos walked rapidly home, making his way from policeman to policeman, like a small boat from port to port. He turned into his narrow hallway with pounding heart. He thought of tricks he had seen in the movies of tough fighters kicking a pursuer back from upper stairs.

Footsteps sounded in the street behind. He bolted madly up a flight.

He came to an abrupt halt below his landing. What was he going to tell Abigail? That he had found a hundred-dollar bank note tucked mysteriously in his pocket? A likely story that would be! He cringed as he imagined her lashing remarks. That he had won a numbers ticket? She was death on gambling, except the hospital and church sweepstakes. Beside, she would take it for their savings.

He might say that he had gotten a bonus. Yes, that was it. Still, she'd be suspicious. He'd have to kind of work up to it.

He found Abigail fuming and sputtering in the kitchen. It gave him a chance to sneak into the little nook he called his den. There was a secret compartment behind the floorboard where he kept little treasures that might cause trouble. The bulky pages of his closely written book were there. There was a beautifully gawdy and faded red garter; the twenty-year-old souvenir of the single night in his life when he had gotten drunk and shot the week's pay. There was a small, ten-cent strong box holding some cheap foreign coins and stamps. With nervous fingers, he unlocked the strong box and slipped in the note.

Abigail looked at him sharply over the soup. "Amos!" she said accusingly, "why aren't you eating your dinner?"

Amos jumped and colored. He gave a guilty grin. "Finishing a special job for the boss. Got it on my mind."

"Hm-m-m!" she snorted. "Another special job, is it? Why do they always give *you* these special jobs and never a raise?"

He said, "Now, Abby, they'll probably give me a bonus. And there are a lot of good young bookkeepers who would be glad to get my job."

"And they'll probably get it!" she announced. She gave a melodramatic glance toward the ceiling. "Heaven knows what's going to happen to us when you're sacked!"

Amos pressed his lips firmly together. Somehow, he felt more confident than usual. "Abby, I haven't been sacked!"

Her eyes grew teary and reproachful above a wrathful chin. "But they never gave you back your last pay cut!"

She bolted a lump of meat. "A worm!" she quavered wrathfully. "I used to think a man who went tumbling around dark caves would have some push and spunk to him. I should have known that only worms crawl around underground!"

He said quickly, "All right, all right! How about a movie tonight?"

She glared at him with fresh suspicion. "Movies on Monday for us that can barely pay the rent! Where'd you get the money, Amos?"

He lied glibly. He never could admit saving money out of thirty-five cents a day allowance! "New bookkeeper blew me to lunch a couple of times."

She was still elaborating on their poverty when she came out in her Sunday best.

It was a hectic night for Amos. His dreams carried him through the world of high finance aboard ocean-

going yachts and custom-made cars. He sat on boards of directors. He sunned himself on a tropical isle. And he ate endless hot dogs without thought of expense at Coney Island.

He awakened early, tired, but excited. He sneaked into his den. His hands shook as he opened the little tin box. A hundred dollars—and it was *his!*

He blinked slowly. A chilly feeling raced through his stomach. The bank note, which should have greeted his eyes, was not there. It was not anywhere in the secret cubicle, nor in the room.

Wildly, he flung open the door to accuse his wife. But she was her usual ruffled self, bustling and scolding with no conscience. Quietly, he closed the door. He wiped a clammy brow. Maybe there had never been a hundred dollar bank note!

Flanagan winked as he came in the office. What's wrong, Amos, that bank roll get you down?"

Amos gave a sickly grin and staggered over a lurching floor. Then there had been money—that hundred dollars! It had actually existed. He wasn't crazy—*or was he?*

"Well, to hell with it!" he muttered savagely. It had already ruined two meals and a night's sleep, and cost him eighty hard-saved cents. He made up his mind not to think of it again. He thought of it all day.

It was five-fifteen when Flanagan rushed back. "Amos, gimme that hundred bucks for a few minutes. Mr. Tillson's got to catch a train and can't wait for the bank to send up money."

Amos looked at him miserably. "I lost it!"

Flanagan eyed him sharply.

Amos gulped. "I'm telling you the truth! Here, look!" He hauled out his remaining single dollar.

Flanagan's voice ripped through the unreality engulfing him. He said, "Thanks. I'll return this in a minute."

He raced down the room, holding a hundred-dollar bank note in one fist. Amos looked stupidly at the single dollar left in his hand. He was still looking at it when Flanagan came back and counted ten tens on top of it.

Flanagan laughed. "Pretty tough when the bosses have to grab a loan off the bookkeepers, eh? Well, good night, Amos."

Amos fingered the notes. He counted them dazedly a few times. He had a terrible feeling inside of him. For one thing, that bank note had absolutely not been there earlier. He had looked a dozen times. But the thing that frightened him most was that he had caught a flash of the serial number. And that serial number was different from the bank note of the day before!

It was clear that whatever was happening, he couldn't tell anybody about it! It was also quite clear that the bonus gag wouldn't work if money was going to come and go like it pleased!

Well, what was he going to tell Abby? He felt suddenly mad and grim. Why should he tell her anything? Was he master in his own house, or wasn't he?

That was not a very happy thought. He colored, and wandered slowly out of the office. In any case, he could stave off trouble by taking home a paid bill. He stopped by the renting office.

Miss Nelson came back with a receipt book. She smiled pleasantly. "Paying rent twenty days in advance is a—" She stopped and looked at Amos. "Are you ill, Mr. Johnson?"

She looked up at him with suspicious eyes and backed away. "I don't know you . . . I . . . I don't want it." She turned and hurried away.

He looked up wildly from the single dollar in his hand. He grinned feebly. "No. I guess I just forgot the money."

He walked out looking at his single dollar. The ten tens Flanagan had given him had vanished! He put the dollar back in his pocket. Something like horror gripped him. That pocket had just been empty. *But now there was a roll of bills in it!* Ten tens, he discovered—the same ten.

He peeled off a ten and marched belligerently into the nearest store. It was a candy shop. He said, "What's that?"

The clerk looked at him. "A ten. What's wrong with it?"

"You tell me!" Amos gritted.

The clerk examined it. "Looks good enough to spend, mister!"

Amos gave a stiff nod. "Well, you just ring it up in your register and give me a box of candy worth that much!"

The clerk examined it again, shrugged and rang it up. He wrapped up a large box of expensive candy.

Amos trudged homeward in a blue funk. One hand was wrapped firmly around the wad of bills. He saw their insurance office and remembered that the quarterly would soon be due. He stopped in and caught their agent with his hat on.

The agent said, "Pay now? Why not? That's the way to regard insurance! You know, it wouldn't be a bad stunt to increase your policy, Mr. Johnson." He looked up from the receipt book. "Hey! What's wrong?"

Amos looked back with a face like chalk. "I'll pay on the regular date, I guess."

He stumbled along three or four blocks. This was impossible! All his life he had handled money, and never had money vanished and reappeared like this before! Damned if he wouldn't bet it was back in his pocket again.

It was. It gave him a distinctly uncomfortable feeling.

He turned into a restaurant to clear his muddled thoughts. He ordered strong tea. It was an extravagance. He was only four blocks from his own house where there was tea waiting. But he needed to think alone.

His thinking resulted in a large zero. There wasn't anything you could think about a thing like this!

He reached for his money unwillingly. It was going to be just another annoyance. His bank roll would have shrunk to his single dollar again.

His heart bounced madly. The money was still there! He paid with a ten, and watched the waiter bring back change! He blinked at it with belligerent amazement. The money worked!

Mechanically, he started to leave his usual nickel tip. Two things happened in his mind almost simultaneously. He thought he saw the money in his hand vanishing. At the same instant he thought that for this once, he might splurge, give the waiter a real tip.

He closed his eyes and opened them slowly with icy calm. The money was still in his hand.

The waiter said, "By George, that was a clever trick, sir!"

Amos said, "What was?"

"Why making that money disappear that way, sir! Quite a fan, I am, on that sort of thing. Used to go to see Oom, the Indian Swami, regular, I did. Houdini, too."

Amos swallowed and laid down the change. "Keep it!" he muttered, and staggered out the door.

III.

AMOS LOOKED at the lavish box of candy in his arms. At first he had been rather pleased with it. It made a fellow feel pretty good to see the envious smiles of girls, and the kidding glances of other men. It made him feel kind of important, and a peg up on the world—until he thought of the money he had spent.

Never in his life had Amos spent twenty dollars like this. The spending of a single dollar had been a matter of considerable thought. The time he and Abigail spent nine dollars on a reckless week end left them in a state of dull uneasiness for weeks. They had avoided looking closely at each other; and had taken up little unmentioned economies, such as spreading butter and jam a little thinner than usual.

A slow fright worked through Amos numbly as he looked back at the candy. Twenty dollars gone—and all he had to show was *this!* Abigail would skin him alive.

He stood fidgeting as the crowds streamed by, screwing up courage of utter desperation. He plucked apologetically at two people's arms. When they turned, words failed him. He could only give a scared grin and mumble an apology.

A bleached blonde in the latest cheap mode waltzed along with a bold stare for passing men. Amos knew the kind. He had seen them in the movies; they were never surprised at anything that happened. He clutched her arm wildly.

She stopped chewing gum to regard him with hard-humored curiosity. "Well, what's up, big shot?"

Amos gagged and colored. He held out the candy. He stuttered with desperate determination, "Look, miss, could I give you this?"

She started to laugh. "What's the gag, mister?"

Her face hardened with sudden suspicion. "By gum, you aren't drunk, and if you're on the make, you're the funniest Indian I ever saw off the reservation!"

Amos got violently purple. "Oh, there's no gag. I just want you to have it!"

She gave a mirthless, edged laugh, "One of these smart old palookas who goes around giving people candy that makes them sick, eh? Well, peddle your horse jokes some place else before I call a cop!"

A crowd was collecting in the mysterious way of crowds. Amos felt a cold hollow of horror inside of himself. He thought of cops and explanations and scandal. The newsboy was grinning at him wisely. He shoved the box into the boy's arms and raced around the corner. His mind was filled with stories of poison candy fiends.

THE cigarette store in his own block was like a port to a hurricane-lashed ship.

Sammy grinned, "Hullo, Amos. You been stealing apples or pinching the girls in the subway?"

Amos gave a shudder. He even looked guilty of something! Suppose they caught him on that girl's complaint and demanded to know where he got the money? What could he tell them? What would Abby say?

He laid a ten-dollar bill shakily on the counter, and ordered his usual cigarettes.

Sammy slapped out a pack. "Ten cents, Amos."

Amos' fingers had been resting on that bank note. Now they rested on the bare heavy glass counter. The ten had vanished. He felt in his pockets. There was a single bill

in there; a soft, worn bill. He knew it was a dollar. All the tens had been crisp and new.

His eyes focused on the pack of cigarettes. All his worries and fears reacted in rage at the cheap brand. He had never liked them; but he had seldom been able to afford a better kind. His teeth gritted as he thought of five months' good smoking he could have had for what he had spent that day—not to mention the vanished money! And how he needed a good smoke at that moment!

He glared from the cigarettes to Sammy. "Never mind those dried cornstalks. Gimme a pack of Marly's twenty-five cent specials!" He tossed out his single dollar.

Sammy gave him the expensive cigarettes and change. He contemplated the wild gleam in the eyes of his usually mouselike customer.

Amos nodded and started out the door.

Sammy said, "Hey, don't you want your ten spot?"

Amos stared at the counter. Something like a terrible roar went through his body. The ten was exactly where he had laid it; and that was precisely the spot it had vanished from when he tried to pay for his usual brand of cigarettes.

Amos wet chilled, dry lips and clenched his hands. It took an effort to force a whisper. "Sammy, are you sure that's my ten?"

Sammy gave him a peculiar look. "It sure didn't fly in here by itself!"

Amos' face grew white and starched. He had to find out about this money once and for all. He said hoarsely, "Sammy, you watch that bill closely and give me a carton of Marly's without taking your eyes off it. My eyes been playing tricks on me today."

Sammy shrugged. Nothing under the sun surprises a neighborhood cigar man. He performed the deed. Amos watched him pick up the ten,

Nine years old—and ten thousand dollars on his head!

● Slans! The supermen! Every human hated them—and there was a ten-thousand-dollar reward for every *dead* slan.

And Jommy Cross was a slan—a nine-year-old boy fleeing from the street corner where he'd just seen his slan mother shot dead in the street—fleeing with a bullet in his side from the secret police of the World Dictator. His father shot down months before—and the hand of every human being on Earth stretched out to him—to grab! DON'T MISS **"SLAN"** by A. E. van Vogt—in the September

Astounding
SCIENCE-FICTION

examine it and give him change. When he put the change in his pocket, his hand encountered the wad of vanished bills.

He stood in front of his house and counted the money five times. A kind of wild calm came over him. It looked like this money wouldn't get spent for any of his usual bills or forms of expense. It would not pay rent nor would it buy ten-cent cigarettes; but it would pay colossal tips and buy flowers and quarter cigarettes.

He thought of his conversation in the park again. He gave a foolish grin. He looked around, ready to find a jeering crowd tuned in on his thoughts. He half believed in tommyknockers, but not to this extent! Not to the extent of anything actually happening in real life. Somewhere, there would be a good solid, down-to-earth explanation for all this. Probably he had been run over or something, and this was all delirium.

But he had no desire to encounter Abigail, unprepared, even in a nightmare! He felt oddly calm now, and considered the problem very methodically. What possible control had he ever had over Abigail? He realized sadly that he never had had any—since that first time he handed over the pay envelope.

"*Ah!*" he breathed with the sudden enlightenment of a long obedient husband. He allowed his imagination to conjure up a beautiful picture of himself as lord and master, doling out dimes to a cowed and humble wife. He chuckled to himself and glanced guiltily toward their entrance way.

It was a great idea, even if it would not work, Amos concluded. Or would it work? He clenched his teeth firmly together. He formed a sudden plan of reckless rebellion. He marched upstairs with a firm tread. His heart was like quaking jelly but his face was a rigid mask. He walked into their flat with forty dollars in one hand.

The sight of money in midweek had an instant, stunning effect on Abby. He was able to force her into a seat at the table, and keep her almost quiet, by the expedient means of pocketing the money every time she interrupted.

At the end of half an hour, she looked grimly quelled. Her eyes were red with hurt and full of temper. In twenty-three years, Amos had never dared lay down the law—and gotten away with it! But forty dollars was a potent force against argument.

"Now you understand," he demanded with a masterful voice he did not feel. "I am making a little outside money. I don't want to be questioned about it. You get half of all I make—as long as you do not mention the subject, nor make any squawks about how I spend my half."

She sniffed. "Very well, Amos if you wish to shut your lifemate out of your confidence! All I say is that if you're gambling—"

He started to pocket the money. Abigail's lips clamped like a steel trap. She snatched the money and bolted for the privacy of their bedroom to hide it with her household savings.

Amos plumped into a chair and looked at his shaking hands. He felt as though he had played a certain loss for titanic stakes, and suddenly discovered he had won. He was glad for the silence of dinner time. It gave him breathing space to gather fresh strength for that final plunge. He felt the thirty-eight dollars still bulging in his pocket. He announced

abruptly, "Now we'll go blow my money."

Abigail swallowed her pride and became elegantly ladylike. "We could call on the Ellings and take some ice cream," she suggested. "We might even take them to a movie."

Amos said: "No, by gum, this is the first money I ever had to blow, and I'm going to blow it on you alone, Abby!"

"What a way to talk to your own wife after twenty-three years!" she simpered.

Amos felt suddenly pretty gay and perky. He said, "Well, you wouldn't want me to say it to somebody else's wife!"

She eyed him with fresh suspicion. "Amos, have you been drinking again?"

"What do you mean, again?" he demanded.

She drew herself up haughtily. "You know very well it's your weakness, Amos! I haven't forgotten that time you swizzled up our whole week's money!"

He gave her a wild look. "That was twenty years ago!"

Her voice began to rise tearfully. "And don't tell me you haven't been waiting for another chance ever since!"

She pinned him with sudden accusation. "Amos, have you been sacked? Is this your sacking bonus you're throwing around like water?

He took a deep breath for calm. "No, I haven't been sacked! And I'm not a drunkard! Now, are you going with me or not?"

"Where are you taking me?" she demanded, with momentary appeasement.

Amos plunked back in his chair, his brief superiority shattered into chaos. Where was he going to take her? How did you blow thirty-eight iron men when you set out to? And blow it, he was determined to; quickly, before it vanished.

THEY STOPPED in the grocery store, debating at length over delicacies they had long dreamed of. There was *pate de foi gras*, and brandied cherries, and candied marons, and chutney—there were at least fifty thing they had long heard and read about. They gazed rapturously at the expensive labels. But the prices were numbing to minds used to bargaining for spareribs.

They compromised on a small bottle of maraschino cherries and a large bottle of a more expensive peanut butter than usual.

"We could have the Masons for dinner tomorrow," Abigail said. "They haven't been eating too well, I hear."

"I'd like to see George," Amos agreed. He remembered that George had once smoked a ten-cent cigar. He eyed a box of fifty. But he was not used to buying things in quantity. He compromised on a box of fifteen.

"What do you think for the meat?" Abigail asked timidly. She had never consulted him before. But she had her eye on some thirty-three-cent lamb chops. The stupendous price needed moral backing.

Amos took a deep breath and looked around with elaborate casualness. He poked a finger toward the ice counter. "Steak. What kind of steak is that, Mr. Meyer?"

Meyer laughed. "Delmonico cuts, Mr. Johnson. Come kind of high. Sixty-eight cents a pound."

The wind went out of Abigail in an astonished hiss. Amos had to force his voice from dry, inflexible throat cords. "Four pounds enough, Abby?"

"I guess so," she faltered feebly.

Meyer just stared.

Amos recalled himself from a place of infinite and fearful unreality into which he had stepped. He lowered his eyebrows. "Well, four pounds, Mr. Meyer!"

"Yes, *sir!*" Meyer gulped with sudden alacrity. "Send it over, Mr. Johnson? Pay or charge?"

Meyer had never suggested the word "charge" before.

Amos was hurtled back to dazzling ice fields. Suppose—suppose that the money had vanished again? But it was still there. He paid. They walked outside and took deep, trembling breaths. They looked white and frightened, and they stared at each other with the eyes of lone children dropped down in the midst of a strange, barbaric city.

They were in the subway before Abigail could speak. Her voice sounded small and unsure. She said, "Amos, that was an awful lot of money we spent just for a dinner!"

He nodded. His face was drawn and set. Somehow, that spending seemed more terrible than the nine-dollar and ninety-cent tip to the waiter, or the ten-dollar box of candy. It seemed almost sinful, like a crime committed with forethought and malice.

He kept his hand around the money in his pocket. He had a bursting desire to take it out and look at it at every step. Twice, he ducked off into corners and peeked at it hurriedly. He could not believe that it was there. He would have enjoyed it more if he could have stayed home and just looked at it, and planned all the things he wanted to do.

THEY FOUND a picture they wanted to see at the Central. They stood uneasily under the glaring marquee, watching the stylishly dressed, prosperous-looking people who hurried by. They felt like foreigners in this dashing, glittering, moneyed world. Men tossed down a five or ten-dollar bill like it was a quarter. Some of them did not even count their change. It made Amos sick and dizzy just to watch them.

He grinned uncertainly at the over-coiffured ticket girl as if she were doing him a favor by taking his money. He got one dollar and sixty-five cent seats in the first balcony. He swelled his chest and held up his head going in. He was in hopes that some of the office crew would see them. But he was troubled by the price they had paid for seats. His methodical mind got to dividing that money into little piles representing various necessities of life; so many pork chops, so many packs of cigarettes—why almost the price of a pair of shoes! It proved impossible to divide his mind between the picture and pork chops. The pork chops won his attention.

They came out and walked northward along Broadway. A man hawked bouquets of flowers. They had been badly mawled and overpriced and the Johnsons knew it. Amos bought a bouquet for Abigail, and watched her pin it on, a soft girlish expression touching her face. But they both worried silently about that bouquet. They had been taken for suckers.

Amos wondered about the tricks of pickpockets. He thought of vastly conceived plans where a gang might come running by in a street brawl and trip him up so that one member could grab his treasured roll of bills. It gave him a fright every time anybody nudged his elbow. The casual glance of strollers rang alarms through his whole nervous system.

They stopped in front of a fancy pipe shop. Amos looked in with

ROOM
FOR RENT

dreamy excitement. His eyes riveted on a grimy collection of carved meerschaum pipes.

"I always wanted a meerschaum," he muttered.

Abby said nervously, "That's a nice one, Amos, that one of General Washington, for sixteen dollars." She swallowed, hard, twice, and her voice dropped to a bare whisper. "Why don't you buy it, Amos?"

He had his eye on a skeleton dance one, priced at a hundred dollars. He grinned with embarrassment, and looked around as if a crowd must have gathered and be watching him. Why damn it, he could buy that cheaper one, just like a snap, if he wanted to!

But he said, "Shucks, Abby, I'll look around, first!" It sent a cold chill through him just to think of spending sixteen dollars on one object.

They clutched each other's arms as if they had scraped past some terrible danger. It suddenly struck Amos that Abby had wanted him to buy the pipe! It was the most dazing blow of the day, realizing that. Why, there must be a million things she wanted herself! And he knew what a wild expense like that would mean to her.

Abby plucked his arm timorously under a blaze of neon lights. "We haven't been to any place like this since that old beer garden, the night we got married, Amos."

He wet his lips bravely. "Well, we could try this one. Says four dollars minimum charge. But we got it to spend!"

She drew him nervously away. "Oh, we couldn't do it tonight! We'd have to have some clothes, anyway. And those are regular holdup places, besides."

He breathed a sigh of relief mixed with regret. It would be pretty swell to tell the boys at the office about the inside of the International Follies. But the place looked awful fancy. It made him nervous just to think of what the prices might be like. Why some of these places charged a dollar for a bottle of ten-cent ginger ale!

They stopped in a man's shop. Amos bought some outlandish ties and socks he would never, possibly, wear. Twice, Abigail started to criticize the prices and material. It seemed outright wicked, just throwing his money away and getting stung like that beside. But each time her voice failed her. She felt very uncertain in this sudden world of riotous spending. And Amos was getting terribly nervous, trying to appear unconcerned, as if he spent three or four dollars any 'old time he felt like it.

They stopped in front of a ladies' hat shop, looking at the bargain specials in the window. Abigail would rather have looked through all the shops in town, and taken her time about shopping, but Amos almost shoved her into the store.

They showed her two hats, a cheaper one in which she looked really well, and an atrocious nightmare they were trying to sell her for two dollars more. She turned tearfully to Amos. It just didn't seem right, going and buying something offhand like this.

He said vaguely, "They're both nice, Abby."

She quavered, "This one's two dollars more."

He gave a bright smile. "That's much nicer than the cheaper one."

He did not think that, but he had to say it. He was scared pink that their money was going to vanish again. He wanted to spend all of it

he could. It did not occur to him to buy her both hats.

He thumbed the money in his pocket doubtfully. Maybe it was going to stay by him, now. But then, maybe it wasn't! He shoved her grimly into another store.

She gave him a perplexed, frightened look and let herself be sold some flimsy sheer things just because the girl showed them to her. She pointed, once, to more serviceable stockings at a lower price. Amos nearly bit her head off.

They could have taken a taxi home, but it never entered their heads. They walked, feeling easier as they got away from the crowds. Abigail's hold on his arm tightened until she was leaning against him. She chattered and laughed, a little hysterical, but gay. It was the first time in many years that Amos had thought of her as the young girl he had married. It brought a lump to his throat. It made him think that pinching pennies can have a lot to do with a bitter tongue.

Amos stopped to pass the time of night with Tony, the janitor. He owed him one dollar and twenty-five cents for scrubbing. He found he had nineteen twenty-five left. On a sudden impulse that brought his heart jumping into his throat, he gave Tony all but the ten-dollar bill.

Abigail had already gotten a snack on the table when he arrived upstairs. She looked tired and puzzled, but happy. Amos put his arm around her and pecked her forehead. It had been a long time since he had done that. He knew that she was worried about all the money they had wasted. He felt conscience-stricken about it himself.

She said hesitantly, "I had a good time, Amos. It's near swept me off my feet. And I won't complain any, like I promised. But I'd hate to have to spend all that every night. It just wears me out. And my feet hurt."

Amos stared into his empty teacup. He had a terrible feeling. Suppose they *did* have to spend all that every night?

His hand slipped into his money pocket. He grew very cold and floaty inside himself. The ten-dollar bill had vanished. He had precisely one dollar and five cents, the exact amount he had owned before Flanagan gave him the ten tens that afternoon.

He looked at his hideous ties and thought dismally of the meerschaum pipe.

IV.

A LOUD thrashing noise brought Amos out of slumber with a distinct sense of danger. He was knocked violently flat. He batted his eyes at the storm-torn features of his wife.

He sat up with amazement. "What's wrong?"

She beat his shoulders hysterically. She lifted her eyes beseechingly toward heaven. "As if he didn't know!" she screamed.

Amos shook his head. "I don't."

"Oh!" she sobbed. "First a worm and then a liar and now a thief!"

Amos rolled expertly toward the far side of the bed. "I don't know what you're talking about."

She left him in no further doubt. He soon learned that he had stolen her forty dollars during the night, sneaked out and hidden it some place. Probably, he had guzzled it up like a drunken sailor!

Amos considered the impossibility of such an event in the same room with a woman who slept like a starving cat at a mouse hole. He wisely decided that this was not quite the

time to bring up that angle. He was deeply concerned about the disappearance of the money, but he was more concerned about his own physical survival.

He began to steal into his clothes. Abigail was thundering ominously around the room. Twice, while she screamed of suicide, she nearly killed him with a heavy missile. She grew violently green with rage. A rush for the bathroom saved him from a cornered attack.

Amos stood undecided with one leg in his trousers. Usually, she subsided after getting sick, satisfied with his timid ministrations and admission of guilt. But never before had Abigail had forty missing dollars to get mad about! A fresh tirade from the bathroom decided him. He grabbed his remaining clothes and bolted for the sanctuary of the janitor's.

Tony said, "Coma right in, Mr. Amos!" and yelled back to the kitchen, "Maria! Mr. Amos will eat the coffee with us."

"You sort of . . . uh . . . expected me?" Amos gulped.

Tony closed the dumb-waiter door. "These little arguments, they come up—*and down.*" He laughed and jerked a thumb at the dumb-waiter.

He planted his chair square up to the table and spoke with a worried expression. "Looka here, Mr. Amos, me, I'm no fresh guy when somebody's nice to me. But you give me a little present last night. You remember?"

Amos licked dry lips.

Tony nodded. "How mucha you give me, Mr. Amos?"

Amos swallowed. "Well, there was a dollar twenty-five I owed you. And eight dollars besides."

Tony thumped the table. "You don't need to tella me that! I know it! I come right in and count it with Maria. We put it in the sugar bowl to save for a little wine press."

He strode across the room and came back to dump the sugar bowl. "How much you make out of that?"

"Eight dollars," Amos said hollowly.

Tony leaned across the table with fierce brows. "Thatsa what I make from it. So one dollar and a quarter she is missing! Somebody in this house, they walk in their sleep. And there's a-nobody in here but Maria and me!"

A shriek sounded from the kitchen. A skillet bounded from Tony's head. Amos made his escape.

AMOS' WORK did not go too well that morning. He kept expecting the freshly written figures to disappear from his ledger, or to awaken suddenly and find himself some place else. Life was very dark. He considered morosely that if this was delirium, he might at least be spared delusions of working in the office.

He walked out gloomily at lunch time. In her rage, Abby had taken the dollar and five cents he had left. Probably Joe would trust him for lunch, but he hated to ask. He would have money—two real honest dollars that didn't pull a disappearing act—except for his sudden richness!

He stood in the streaming sunlight and glared at the restaurant across the way. It was a high-priced place where the bosses ate. He had always hankered to have one meal there.

He thought, "If I had that ten-spot that disappeared, I could have a swell lunch, at least! And all I've got is a headache."

He jammed his hands disconsolately in his pockets and started down the street. He stopped in

three steps. He knew what it was before he looked. A nice, crisp, hundred-dollar bank note was in one hand.

Amos gawked and glared. He felt enraged and excited simultaneously. He gritted at the note, "All you've cost me so far is a lot of trouble, but I'm going to have one good meal off you if I have to wash dishes!"

He ate a lavish lunch, his head coming higher above the table with each course. By coffee, he looked around, a little nervously, a little proudly. Flanagan nodded from nearby with surprise. Amos colored, and wondered what Flanagan might say. He had a terrible vision of what Flanagan would say if that bank note had vanished and he couldn't pay for his lunch!

He snatched a look at it under the table. It was still there, new and bright. But it was damp from his clutch when he paid the waiter. His heart ticked off eternities until his change arrived.

Flanagan called him in at three o'clock. "Didn't know you lunched across the way, Amos."

Amos colored. You couldn't always tell with Fanagan exactly what was behind his words.

Flanagan laughed. "Oh, it's all right! I was just thinking that you've been here twenty-three years, and I don't know a damned thing about you! We'll have to get better acquainted one of these days."

Amos beamed. Flanagan sounded like he meant lunch. The only people who had ever asked to eat with Amos, at least in recent years, were Miss McElroy, and a few junior clerks when they were first learning the ropes and needed help.

Flanagan said, "Well, I've got good news for you. The auditors have the B section of books, so you can take the afternoon off."

Amos blinked, and walked out with a feeling of excitement, but without much joy. He wasn't used to time off. He wondered what men did with themselves. Some of them went to bars, but he did not drink. It made him uneasy to hear men's voices get high and wild. There were horse races, but Amos never bet, and it was hard for him to understand how people could get wildly excited over which of the unknown horses won. He might have been a baseball fan, but a wild Irishman had definitely ended his attendance at ball parks some years earlier with a hard sock on the nose.

He wandered into the park. A man sitting on the bench asked for a match and commented on the weather.

Amos said, "It could be snowing, mister, and I wouldn't know it."

The man gave a friendly glance. "Job or family troubles?"

Amos said hollowly, "It would take ten families to give you the trouble I've got with one wife! What would you do if your wife thought you'd swiped forty dollars of her savings when you hadn't?"

The man laughed. "She's probably put it some place and forgotten it."

Amos shook his head. "Nope. This has plain gone forever."

The man looked thoughtful. "Well, if she's like my old lady, and has her mind set that you took it, you'd be better off to say you did and somehow make it good."

"But then she'd be sure I was a crook!"

The man smiled. "She'll be convinced of that anyway. But she'll forgive you for admitting. Hm-m-m. After she gets a few comments off her chest."

"She might," Amos nodded uncer-

tainly. "But forty dollars worth is an awful lot of comments for Abby! She'll jabber for nothing."

"The trouble with us men," the stranger said philosophically, "is that we let our women have money in the first place. The Indians had the right idea."

Amos recalled the sudden change in Abby when he set his foot down the night before. True, he had compromised to the extent of half his money. Still, she had been amazingly meek.

He said, "By gosh, maybe you're right, mister! Here, have a cigar." It made a fellow feel pretty good to be able to hand out a fifteen-cent cigar like that.

Amos walked off across the park. But there was a hitch to the stranger's advice. He could not return her missing forty dollars. It might just disappear all over again! Well, it was obvious that he would have to handle the money from now on. Because that money had to be spent. He wasn't taking any more chances with it.

He glanced in a florist's window and saw some of Abigail's favorite flowers. He grinned, and walked in a little cockily. He bought a large bouquet. He had always wanted to take flowers home on a nice sunny afternoon like this. Gave a man a reason for walking. Something kind of continental and dashing about it.

He stopped by Tony's. The janitor had a black eye and swollen ear. Amos laughed nervously. "I found I hadn't given you that dollar and a quarter, Tony, so I stopped by—"

Tony looked darkly toward Maria. She gave a clucking noise and lifted her arms. "Oh, Mr. Amos, you don't need to lie like that. My Tony and me, we got it all straight."

Amos looked puzzled.

Maria patted Tony's head fondly. "Tony tell me all after you leave. He go out early this morning and get to matching coins with the milkman. He lose and he scared to tell me. But now he tell me and everything all right."

Tony moved her hand painfully off his swollen lump and winked. "Yes, thassa right, Mr. Amos. Don't think no more about it!"

Amos went upstairs considering the astonishing ways of married life. Tony had not taken that money, he knew. But Tony had admitted he had, so everything was now all right with Maria.

AMOS HAD to steel himself before his door. He wiped his forehead, adjusted his tie, pulled down his coat. He swallowed a good many times. He threw back his shoulders and marched in. He hoped that he did not look like he felt.

Abby glared with red eyes. "Sacked!" she howled, and somehow, that thought seemed to make her feel better. "I knew it last night! That was your compensation money you were throwing away like a maniac!"

Amos stood at the table and fumbled with the flower box. He said, "I haven't been sacked. Furthermore, I took that money back."

Her bosom swelled like the avenging angel's.

Amos lowered his brows and beetled at her. "I have decided that the man of the house should handle the money. You can have anything you like, as long as this outside work keeps up, but I will do the paying."

She sat staring, her mouth opening and closing like a beached fish. She suddenly began to cry. "But I wanted that forty to make my savings even, Amos!"

He swallowed hastily. He had expected a different kind of outburst.

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"Well, maybe you can save it out of the house money, if we eat out a lot." That seemed a sudden, happy inspiration. He repeated, "Yes, we'll be eating out a lot. Go get washed and we'll go shopping. We're going to buy some clothes."

Amos was thoroughly worn out when his own shopping was finished. Abby had decided upon a new suit, two shirts, socks and some ties. The new hat was an ordeal. He looked quite natural in his nondescript old hat, but he looked like a frightened rabbit in a new one.

Abby's shopping was even more tiring for him. It was carried on with a kind of grim, homicidal tension. He quickly learned that it was fatal to approve of anything she purchased. He began to wish he could just give her the money and tell her to spend it. But that would be hopeless. It might disappear again. Anyway, she would only spend part and salt the rest of it away. And that would vanish.

He was dog tired when they got home, and he still had thirty-one dollars left. It was incredible! They were loaded with packages. They had even bought two new lamps and a horrible trick ash tray. And still they had not been able to spend all that money.

George Mason regarded the expensive flowers, the expensive steak, the delicacies, the cigars, and the Johnson's new clothes. The steak felt good in his stomach, but it only served to remind him of how few steaks they had eaten lately, and how threadbare their own clothes were. Abby's crowing over Amos' new outside work—with her rage temporarily hidden—gave the dinner a note of discomfort.

George said, a little forcedly, "Well, I'm glad things are going well for you, Amos. I suppose you'll be taking a nicer apartment?"

"Why, of course!" Abigail agreed promptly. "We need a much larger one. Amos needs a real den to work in, and I always wanted a sewing room. It would be nice to have a real living room, too, and a hall for coats and things."

Amos' face felt like dry starch. He wondered when Abby had decided all this. He recalled, uncomfortably, his experience when he tried to pay the rent. There was no telling how long this weird money would keep up. A man couldn't plan on it. Not even after he got it.

George laughed bitterly. "Well, I don't begrudge you, Amos. You've waited a long time for a good break. But it just seems like when a fellow starts going good, he gets more than his share of luck. I never realized it until we got our dispo—"

Sylvia Mason shrilled, "*George!*"

He colored and clamped the tip of his cigar with tight lips.

Abigail looked at them. "*Dispossess?* Sylvia, why didn't you tell us? Even if Amos hadn't gotton all this extra work, we could have helped when things were that bad!"

George said grittily, "We don't want charity, Abby. I shouldn't have let it slip. It's just—well, damn it, we got the notice two days ago, and this afternoon I learned I'm going back to work. *But in two months!* Try and tell that to the landlord! And tomorrow, out we go."

Abigail laughed with the comfortable superiority of those sure of their living. "Think no more of it, George. Amos will let you have enough to tide you over."

Amos felt glued rigid. He knew they had a hundred and sixty dollars in their savings account that they could let George have. But

how was he going to get that money out of Abby? And if he gave George any of this weird, trick money, it might vanish. The expense was in the nature of regular living. The loan was something they would have done anyway.

"Well?" demanded Abigail with a rising edge to her voice. "Aren't you going to make an offer to your best friend?"

Amos gave a sickly grin. "Why yes, sure. Sure, George! But you see, I . . . that it—"

George darkened and his jaw went hard. He forced a grin to strained lips. "Never mind, Amos, we'll manage somehow. These women are kind of forcing things on us men."

The worn heels on George's shoes held Amos' glance hypnotized. He thought of the terrible price they had paid for movie tickets the night before, and of his luncheon bill that day.

He wheezed miserably, "No, it isn't that I don't want to do it, George. It's just . . . well, this is day-to-day work. It pays well, but I don't know until each day when it will end. Now we've got some savings—"

George said, "Let's forget it!"

Abigail bridled indignantly. "Why nothing of the sort, George. Amos has been splurging like a millionaire. Amos Johnson, you give George Mason all the money you've got this very minute, and you can send him some more tomorrow!"

Amos felt weak and dizzy. He tried to think of something to say. He could not. He could not think of anything at all except the terrible uncertainty of what Abby wanted him to do. He reached in his pocket and pulled out his thirty-one dollars.

He said, squeakily, "I hope it lasts until I get my hands on some more, George."

George took it with embarrassment. "It will go farther than a million ever went before! Thanks, Amos."

THE REST of the evening streamed over Amos like a river. He was numb with misery. He prayed fervently that the money would last. But he did not believe it would. It would just vanish, as when he tried to pay his own rent and insurance.

He helped George on with his coat, and felt the relief and thanks in the squeeze George gave him. George was almost jubilant with relief.

He laughed, "You know, Abby, I can remember the first time I met this lug. He got me sorer than a hornet. He was showing some magician tricks, and he kept making my watch disappear all evening long."

Amos smiled with recollection. "Gosh, George, I'd forgotten about that! Used to know a lot of those tricks. I don't remember them any more."

George gave him a sly dig. "You remember enough to pull a swell job out of thin air!"

The Masons left. Amos tumbled into bed with chills, and the rattle of Abigail's indignation over the way he had acted about the money. He dreaded to see the morning. George would probably telephone that he had lost the money.

But the morning passed without the call. Amos felt easier by noon. He thought of lunch and examined his wealth. There was a dollar which Abby had given him. He thought of lunching across the way again, and reached back in his pocket. He gazed cheerfully at another hundred-dollar bank note that turned up there. It was kind of good fun, now that he was getting onto the trick.

He stood looking at the note, and

thought of lunching at his old place, Joe's, instead. The money vanished. It gave him a creepy, cold start. He hastily decided on the more expensive place. The money reappeared.

It was a funny trick, and he mystified the cashier at the bank with it. He had a sudden inspiration. He could telephone Abby through the house pay station and tell her to go shopping. They would stop at the shops later and he would pay and pick up the purchases.

"Spend a fortune!" he ordered her. "Eighty or ninety dollars if you like!"

ABIGAIL had not been up to that vast sum. In fact, she had not done very well. She had spent most of the afternoon in the delicatessen. She wore a rather frightened look when Amos came in.

She said, fearfully, "I got an awful lot of dainties, Amos. The bill's eleven dollars and fourteen cents!"

He grinned. "What else?"

Tears crept along her eyelids. "It's downright wicked, throwing money away like this!"

He patted her shoulder. "We're only young once, Abby. What else did you get?"

"Well, I couldn't think of very much I needed. I got you some more socks, and some ties they had on sale. And a nice smoking jacket and a pair of slippers."

He brushed these items aside. "How about yourself?"

The tears ran down her cheeks. "I got another hat, Amos. You're not mad, me buying two hats in one week like this?"

He laughed and gave her a hug. "Lord no! Buy twenty if you like!"

She was crying now, baffled and somehow hurt. The hat and two pair of elbow-length gloves—on sale—and a dress had been all she could think of for herself. And a new rug for the dining room. They didn't really need it, but it was on sale for six ninety-eight. Her total spending was under fifty dollars.

She felt better when she put on her new hat and gloves and dress. It worked a surprising change in her.

Amos said, "Gee, you really look like something, dressed up, Abby. You look better than the girl I married!"

She turned red and pleased. "Amos! The things you say!"

She plucked fitfully at his buttonhole. "Why can't we just kind of wait for the good sales, and maybe spend a little when we see something we really want?"

He shuffled uneasily. "Well, let's have a fling and get all the things we been talking about all these years first. You know, it kind of picks a man up, just the spending by itself. Makes him work better, and puts some push into him."

She hid reproach behind a timorous look. She had never suspected that Amos could be so stubborn about anything.

She said coyly, "Amos, I found a nice, big apartment we could get. It would only cost twenty-one dollars more than this flat."

He compressed his lips rigidly. "Now, Abby, let's not go into that again. If this job keeps up, maybe we can afford those things, but not until I know how it's going. It might end any time without warning. It might end tomorrow."

She stood perfectly still a moment. There was something very strange about all this. Heaven help him when she got to the bottom of it! Still, she had to admit it was kind of nice, all the wild excitement in which they were suddenly living. Why, the clerks over at Dryden's

were showing her special attention already.

Amos gave her a sudden, boyish hug. "And now, Mrs. Toots, how about us young people stepping out tonight?"

"I do declare, I think you're out of your mind with second childhood!" She colored, but scuttled off to get ready with a younger step than in many a day. She giggled at herself in the mirror. Out of his head or not, it was real nice to have your husband cavorting around like a wild young man, and winking at you and being fresh like that.

Amos picked a restaurant with the largest advertisement and most expensive name in the evening paper. They had an indigestible dinner, a surly waiter, a sexy floor show that brought Abigail's lips indignantly together and seriously hampered Amos' digestion; and the bill was only four dollars.

He gave the waiter a dollar tip. Abigail said, "That waiter was too fresh to get any tip, Amos. Besides, real people don't tip that way."

He gave her a miserable look. It was a lot for the bad service they got.

She gave an adamant nod of her head. "Fifty cents would have been plenty. That's all the rich men tip, Amos. Don't forget, I used to be cashier at a banker's luncheon place."

AMOS AND ABBY drifted uneasily through the Broadway crowds. They had always talked about this, sometimes they had come up on nice evenings just to walk under the blazing lights. But now it all seemed kind of forced; and the people and the

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places weren't so impressive as they had been.

Amos stopped in a ticket speculator's while Abby waited outside. He looked at the three-thirty and four-forty prices. He said, "Nothing really good? No eleven dollar shows?"

Abe Greenbaum nearly swallowed his cigar. He leaned across the counter. "Say, ain't you heard the boom was over nine years ago?"

Amos said, "Well, this is kind of special."

Abe sized him up, grabbed two two-twenty seats out of a rack. "Best we got. Good show. That will be nine-eighty."

Amos paid. It dawned on him gradually that he had been stung. He felt very uncomfortable about it. It was bad enough to get soaked high prices, without being a sucker into the bargain.

It was a very arty social problem show, and the Johnsons were not up on the subject. They might have identified their own prototype in the play, but they failed to. And the audience looked kind of weird and dowdy.

Amos whispered once, "These people don't look like they worked much, but they aren't bosses."

Abigail sniffed reproachfully. "And I put on all my new clothes just to mix with them!"

Amos still had thirty-six dollars to spend when the show was over. He was tired, dog-tired, and Abby was asking to go home. But Amos was frightened over that money. They went into a gyp auction. They bought a lamp worth two dollars for seven. Amos colored at the wise glances of the customers. He resented being taken in.

They bought more clothes. Amos breathed thankfully when he discovered a brand of gloves at three dollars a pair. He had never worn gloves, but he got six pairs, one of each shade. They looked nice, lying across each other in a row. Abby bought another hat, and a sweater, and a pair of shoes.

She tugged wearily at his arm. "Let's go home, Amos. You can spend that some other time."

He stared at his bank roll hopelessly. He suddenly spotted a hansom cab with a derelict-looking horse. Abby had wanted to ride in one of those for twenty years.

The price the driver wanted startled Amos. But he laughed. It was within a dollar of what he had left. They took the cab, circling Central Park—and slept through most of the ride. They were chilled and miserable when they got home.

There was a package, postage due, before Amos left for the office in the morning. It contained the box of cigars he had given George Mason, with three cigars gone. A note inside the box read:

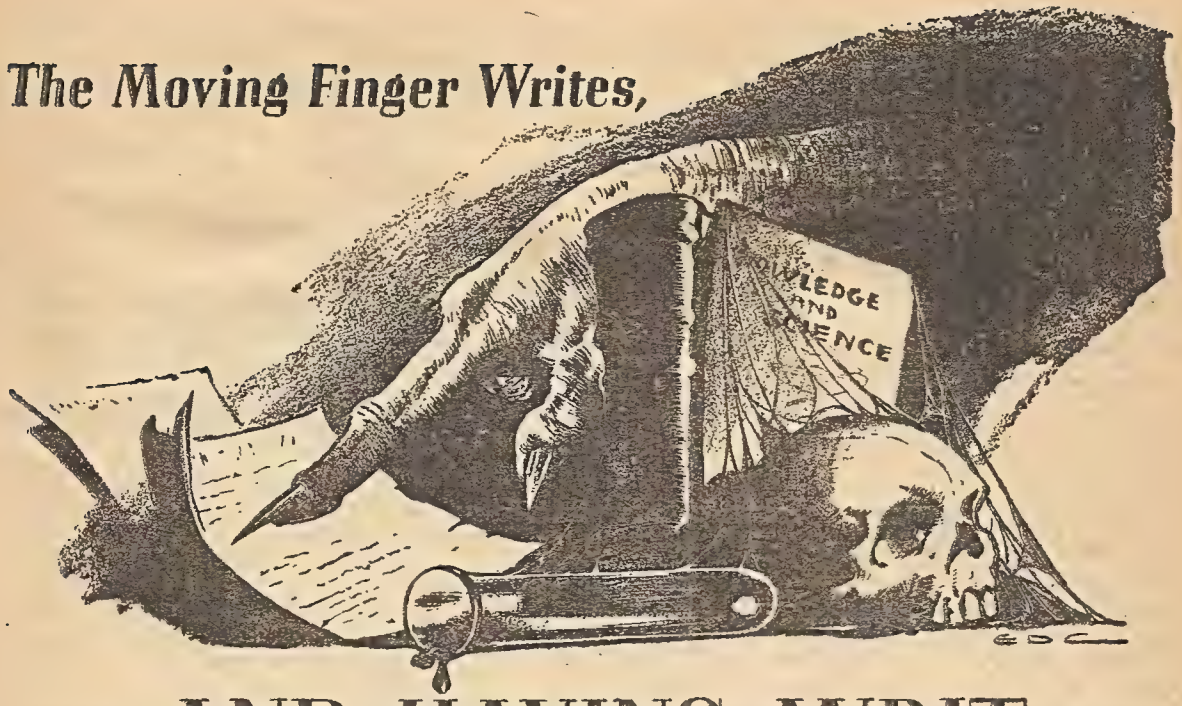
> Your magic is still pretty good. Thanks for loaning me the money—and thanks for lifting it out of my pocket. When I want a joke and don't need rent, I'll look you up. It was a lousy trick.

Amos jammed the cigars beneath his coat and went hastily downstairs. He felt beaten and sick. He had lost the only real friend he had, and hurt George brutally, beside.

He needed no details of what had happened. That money had simply disappeared, vanished, and George thought he had taken it back as a joke. He thought of looking George up. But what good would it do? Nobody would ever believe that there was money you could spend only on foolish luxuries.

TO BE CONCLUDED.

The Moving Finger Writes,



---AND HAVING WRIT---

The interior is changing, too, you notice.

Dear Mr. Campbell:

You better enlarge our department this month, because your new jacket is going to arouse plenty of comment.

I haven't read the current issue yet. I'm still fermenting with the shock of getting Unknown on the first Friday of the month, when I had been resigned to the inevitable wait.

Ring up one vote for the new cover. Now the job is to renovate the interior—because it still looks like a pulp after you open up. My suggestion would be to do away completely with story illustrations and substitute fantastic drawings without any checks on the artists' imaginations.

Authors you need are C. L. Moore and C. A. Smith, both supreme masters of atmosphere.

As for my favorite stories—everybody else is doing it—"The Elder Gods" takes first place, "The Summons," second, and "The Indigestible Triton," third. More from all three authors.

And, just to be different, I reread the super-super "Sinister Barrier" and I still don't like it.—Lawrence Miller, 2740 Vincent Ave., Norfolk, Virginia.

Yah! Then we'll go to work on *them!*

Cheerio, Campbell:

July issue: What in Helvede you trying to do, turn your readers into maniacs overnight? Print another "Fear" and I'll go back to something safer, like "The Rover Boys"!—Bob Tucker, Fantasy Fictioneer, Box 260, Bloomington, Ill.

Unknown frays more quickly because, unlike most magazines, it has 160 pages.

Dear Mr. Campbell:

"Fear" is horridly and horribly lovely!

Let me salute the magazine which finally has dared to present pure fantasy. Long have I been disgusted or disappointed to find the "ghost" or "creature" in a mystery revealed at the end as some scheming politician or business shyster. Let me suggest that psychopathic phenomena and the occult continue to hold their places. After all, there is so little that we really think we know—and part of even that must be accounted for by mere theory or hypothesis. In this sameness and slushiness of popular print, just let your good work go on.

I like the new cover, but your outlets should be instructed to feature Unknown more prominently unless you make its color more brilliant. The July issue was practically invisible among the other publications, and I had to hunt somewhat before I located it. But the dignified front appeals to me immensely. By the way, why does the backing of Unknown fray so soon?—Gerald H. Adams, Wiley College, Marshall, Texas.

We like variety, though!

Dear Mr. Campbell:

A revolutionary and exceptional issue, the July, 1940, Unknown.

On the question of the new covers I am in a quandary. Both the old illustration and the new contents covers are pleasing and the best in the fantasy. I will be magnanimous, though, and go along with the editor and most likely the majority of readers and vote for the new distinguished covers. There might be added a string, and that being a possible full-page colored illustration on any of the three remaining covers. As you see, I already long for another Cartier cover.

As far as the stories go, there might have been just one. For me, "Fear" was the only story in the issue, and the only story of its kind so far printed in the pages of this magazine. Far from having a too-original theme, a theme I have seen before in "The Eternal Mask" movie and in Evans' "Summons" a while back in Unknown, and other shorts in other mags, still Mr. Hubbard gave it such original treatment and imbued it with such mysterious horror that this reader really shuddered at the close of the story. Oddly enough the ending was not as obvious as it might have been to a reader who has come across the plot before. It startled me with its unexpectedness, a climax I should have divined before the last page. Possibly because the majority of the Unknown novels end with a more or less sugary note and very few have a really powerful denouement may be the reason for my surprise. That mysterious horror mentioned before is found in very few of the novels, only "Sinister Barrier," "Slaves of Sleep," "Death's Deputy," "But Without Horns" and "Fear," and possibly "None But Lucifer." The remainder had so much adventure, or humor, or distracting action that the many weird persons and things encountered were unceremoniously pushed off into the oblivion of the well-known background. Yarns like "The Ghoul," the Prester John series, "Lest Darkness Fall" and many others fall into this category. The first might be termed satirical horror-slapstick—as might be most of Hubbard's. The second are adventure tales with a slight tinge of magic. The third merely story—how the latter landed in Unknown is uncertain. So lest you forget, why not print more of the less jocular and satirical adventures and leave out these funny yarns for a while.

What a wonderful movie "Fear" would make!—Charles Hidley, New York, New York.

Hubbard spends a month planning—then needs little revising. He can then make you feel a nightmare like "Fear" was too logical!

Dear Mr. Campbell:

Unknown's new dress is magnificent. It even exceeded expectations. That nice blending of good taste and striking arrangement was all the mag needed to place it in the quality group.

Does Hubbard do any revising? Or does he whack it out as he goes along and send it in without looking at it again. His turnout is almost unbelievable. Not that there aren't quite a number of hacks who can turn 'em out at much greater speed. There are. But they're just that: hacks. Hubbard's rapidity is amazing because he's such a darn good writer. His writing is invariably up to a literary standard, and it's a high one.

"Fear" was disappointing in one way. As nightmare fodder it is unexcelled. Freudian clambakes such as it should not be read just before retiring, as I read it. Bad atmosphere. Doors slam suddenly, there are patches of shadow in corners where the light doesn't reach, and one is constantly distracted by the necessity—psychological—of getting up in order to make sure the door is locked.

And the writing was superb. It even exceeded Wells' grim masterpieces of character insight, "The Moth" and another whose title I can't recall at the moment. They were short stories; "Fear," a novel. Both Wells and Hubbard painted a horribly realistic picture of a man going mad. Hubbard, I think, did the better job. Lord, what beautiful writing! The conception, the hellish picture of those nightmare regions, the

realism; all were combined to make as vivid a piece of sheer horror as ever crawled in a maniac's brain. It was a strange—and, I assure you, unpretty—mixture of fascination and disgust; I felt sick after finishing it. But I'm going to read it again.

It was, I said, disappointing in one respect. It wasn't a fantasy. It was too logical; much too logical. After all the buildup about it being able to happen to any man, the end was a letdown. Cerebral malaria, indeed! Certainly madness can happen to any man. All the boogie-men stuff led one to expect something he didn't get. It confused the issue; it was superfluous; out of place when you discover that the whole thing is just a creation in the mind of the hero.

"Fear" was an epic Unknown psychological study. It was a classic of characterization. But it was not a true Unknown story.

"The Dream" was clever, and quite amusing; broached nothing new, but made good reading. Don't you think a little more humor would have been a relief after "Fear"?

Belknap not bad. Miller's werewolf short, stock adventure stuff. Hardly worth reading.

The serial came tripping gayly out and fell flat on its face. Bluntly, it's lousy.

One other thing. As in *Astounding*, the editor's pages are one of the most fascinating features. The most fascinating feature, if the fiction doesn't count.—Joseph Gilbert, 391 Park St., Columbia, S. C.

Pity ye Ed! "Some like it cold, some like it hot, some like it—" If you readers'll just agree on it, I'll give you what you want!

Dear Mr. Campbell:

Before your July issue of Unknown came out, I was afraid I would not be very kindly disposed toward such a conservative cover—but now that I have actually seen it I believe I rather like it.

This was to be an experimental issue. By substituting a new and very conservative—"dignified" as you call it—cover for

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your usual grotesque or fantastic cover paintings, you hoped you might possibly attract the attention of a few additional readers. It was not your intention to do this through the medium of any unholy-looking monsters of fantasy, but rather through the quiet and simple appeal to the usual audience of the standard-type magazine. What an excellent idea! Indeed, when my eyes first fell upon Unknown's new cover I was very much impressed. Yet, as I glanced through the inside illustrations, I was astonished. Never in any of your previous issues of Unknown have I seen such a ghastly collection of morbid, bloodthirsty illustrations as this copy contained. How can you hope to win new readers by a different cover if the inside illustrations are as monstrous, if not more so, than have any previous covers ever been? If you are trying to be more dignified in your illustrations, be consistent throughout the magazine.

What is Unknown developing into, a horror magazine? I was never so disappointed in Hubbard as I was after reading his "Fear." Were it not for Hubbard's many past successes, including that remarkable first attempt for Unknown, "The Ultimate Adventure," I should almost say he was not topnotch Unknown material. Unknown should be devoted to light fantasy, rather than to depressing or hair-raising tales of the supernatural. I might illustrate the former by such earlier stories as Gold's "Trouble With Water"; de Camp's "Divide and Rule!"; Bloch's "The Cloak"; and Guernsey's "The Hexer," just to mention a few which were supposed to have set a precedent.

Much as I dislike his illustrations, I must admit that old warped-brain—pardon me if he isn't—Cartier is an ace when it comes to drawing spine-chilling and ghostly illustrations. I might add, as a further compliment to him, that as long as he continues to illustrate for Unknown the publishers need never worry about their readers getting a restful night's sleep.—R. B. Kimball, 1430 Parkchester Road, New York, N. Y.

Maybe we ought to retitle the book "Escape"?

Dear Sir:

While Europe is engaged in a barbarous conflict and America is desperately rearming, I more than ever need a source of mental recreation. To me Unknown has been a gift from the gods, an instrument de-

signed to dispense the most intense pleasure. Since your first issue—I have not missed one issue to date—there have been six or seven classics. Prester John, Harold Shea and now Jim Lowry—all hold fond places in my memory.

However, this letter was prompted primarily by "Fear." You know, in order to get the full benefit out of a story you must allow your mind to become plastic in the author's hands. I did just this while reading "Fear," and I'd like to tell you that seldom has a story treated me the way that one did! Hah! My logical mind asserts that to doubt for one instant the stupidness of believing that such things as pixies and demons and ghosts exist is absurd nonsense—or is it?

I suppose that almost everyone experiences the same tingling feeling through his body when he allows his mind to admit that he would not walk into a graveyard on a rainy midnight and defy the gods to strike him dead. And if a man is innocent until proven guilty—we must concede that the wee men may exist—until we have proof of their nonexistence.

This subject fascinates me so much that some day I hope to train my literary abilities on fantasy fiction and contribute to the mental havoc of Unknown's readers.—Herbert F. Lowe, 1366 Flatbush Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Welcome to the fold!

Dear Mr. Campbell:

First of all, I'd like to make a few preliminary statements. I have been a constant reader of *Astounding* from 1931 on. But Unknown, from my first brief acquaintance with it, didn't appeal to me at all. I did *not* buy it. My reasons were based on a very poor opinion of it from one issue I bought last year.

Last month, I decided to give it another whirl. Much to my surprise I liked the issue, and much more important, *I liked the stories.*

I've just finished the July issue. Only one statement can be made. You have acquired another steady reader. The reason—"Fear."

You term it a "psychological fantasy." It is more than that. It is a great story—true literature.

Psychology has been sadly neglected as a field of fiction. This is a really grim, realistic study of the logical possible workings of a man's mind. The ending came as a sudden shocking surprise to me, and that is as it should be. What more could one ask of any story. May I make a prediction? "Fear" is going to be one of the foremost stories of the year. It is on my list at least.

The rest of the stories were O. K., but "Fear" so outshadowed them that I hardly know how to rate them.

Unknown's new make-up is good. Count me as favoring it. I'm interested in seeing how the rest of the readers are going to react to the change. As you said, it is an experimental move.—Fred Senour, 210 Alameda St., Rochester, N. Y.

Ron Hubbard's back next month.

Dear Editor:

Unknown looks very aristocratic in its new dress. By all means, let this experiment run for several months.

Generally, I'm not much interested in "things that go boomp in the night"—but when they are woven into such a masterly tale as "Fear," such things take on interest. "The Dream" is good, and "The Spark of Allah" starts very well.—D. B. Thompson, 3136 Q St., Lincoln, Nebr.

Sorry—May '39 Unknowns are all gone. Maybe a reader has one to offer.

Dear Mr. Campbell:

After reading *Astounding* for about five years, the Unknown bug has finally bitten me, and I feel qualified to comment long and loud on the new changes.

On the whole, I don't especially like the change on the cover of the July Unknown. I like illustrations—even if they do make me hide my magazine from more conservative friends, in fear of ridicule. I think that there is nothing which adds so much to a magazine as an illustration—or, if it is poor, subtracts so much. If you can get really *good* illustrations, by all means use cover paintings. However, this matter of the cover is not so very important, after all.

Now, for a question. I ordered the May, 1939, Unknown from your Subscription Department—and they didn't have it. Do you know where I might get this issue? Perhaps you have a list of people who have written to you saying they have them for

sale. Possibly you might publish this letter and have any reader with back issues write me. I recall you sent me a list of readers with back numbers of *Astounding* for sale. I would like a reply about this.

I liked "Fear." As a general rule, I don't like ghost stories, but prefer things more like "Sinister Barrier" or "Ultimate Adventure." I also thought a lot of "But Without Horns." I certainly like the policy of publishing book-length stories. The greater length permits a fuller development of a story, and makes it more thoroughly enjoyable.—J. F. Nowlin, 402 W. 17th Ave., Pine Bluff, Ark.

De Camp's muttering about further adventures of Shea and Chalmers.

Dear Mr. Campbell:

Congratulations on the new style! I find it very much improved—though now and then a cover would be appreciated to show off the talents of Isip.

"Fear" beats anything I ever read in the magazine for shivers, except "But Without Horns" and "None But Lucifer." You could almost get along with *only* Hubbard—and the master of screwy logic, de Camp—to do your novels. Incidentally, Cartier is quite a general handy man as an artist, being able to do weirds, humor, or fantasy with equal facility. Keep him away from *Astounding,* however.

Next comes "The Dream." Why wasn't that mentioned on the cover?

"The Flayed Wolf." A new idea, and well done. It's bad enough to see a reconstruction of a Neanderthaler, without this addition to his horrible pan!

"Fisherman's Luck" ought not to have been on the cover. Just a filler.

Haven't started "Spark of Allah" yet. Looks good.

So Harold Shea's back! Great! But we never found if Shea's appearance on the scene spoiled the chance of a giants' victory at the Ragnarok. Maybe another trip might find out if Utgardaloki's gangster brethren were licked. Still, that would necessitate inventing a whole new mythology for Shea to play with, as in the original version the story didn't go much farther.

Special extra hint: What, no humor?

By the way, where's Virgil Finley? His two drawings for "The Wisdom of an Ass," especially the first, were the best I've ever seen in Unknown.

Till "The Moving Finger" stops writing.—Paul Carter, 156 S. University Street, Blackfoot, Idaho.

But—that's what *Astounding Science-Fiction* is for! Unknown's not intended for anything but fantasy.

Dear Sir:

After much thought I have decided to drop this line to you in regard to the subject matter of your magazine. Personally, I think that the magazine on the whole is a fine experiment. However, I should like to suggest that the feature novel in each issue lean more to the science-fiction side than to the weird side. Neither myself, nor my friends who read this type of fiction, can see anything of interest in the latter type of tale. On the other hand, stories like "Sinister Barrier" and "But Without Horns" leave us profoundly affected. I think "Fear" was well written, but lacked interest.—Irving Kirshbaum, 336 East 166th St., Bronx, N. Y. C.

We're after stories continuously.

Dear Sir:

You'd like to hear from us about the new cover style? Fine, it's a chance.

What the blazes difference does the cover make as long as the story is there?

You probably know by this time that the appeal of the magazine is to a particular sort of reader. Also, that as long as the story appeals he is quite likely to keep on reading, regardless of the wrapping.

As far as the new style goes, it may increase circulation by bringing it to the attention of more, a percentage of whom will join the particular sort mentioned above.

Is it fitting? How do we know? I expect to continue reading Unknown, having them all since they started, being moderately sure that the cover style won't bother the contents. However, I'm the same as anyone else; I'll quit when the stories go sour.

Go ahead and experiment; get that circulation that insures the stories. But whether it is fitting? Don't bother—keep the stories.—John W. Bell, 81 Winter St., Whitman, Mass.

Soothing words! Thankee!

Dear Mr. Campbell:

I am not in the habit of writing to editorial departments, but I wish to congratulate you upon the fine caliber of your publication. I am quite sure it is the best fiction magazine in its field.

So far, you have had one very poor story in your magazine. This was "Returned From Hell." I hope you will never have another like it. Now that I've gotten that off my mind, I'll tell you that I've enjoyed all the rest of the stories you've ever published. I especially liked "The Sinister Barrier," "Closed Doors," "The Summons," "The Gnarly Man," "The Ghoul," "Slaves of Sleep," "Whatever," "The Coppersmith," "Anything," "On the Knees of the Gods," "Derm Fool," "The Indigestible Triton," and "All Is Illusion."

Some types I'd like to see in the future are further stories in the series of modern Arabian myths and Dorothy Quick's stories of long-gone times. I'd like to see the oft-suggested sequel to "The Elder Gods." I have enjoyed all the short articles you have published at various times, and I would like to see more book reviews such as that in the December issue. And one poem in each issue. I would like more stories with a background of old folk tales and fairy stories. Sturgeon's "He Shuttles" is a very good example, but a little too coldly logical for my taste. But I like stories of that type.

I think your magazine has done a great thing in discovering and publishing the stories of L. Sprague de Camp. I truly believe that young man will do a lot of worthwhile writing. He has the gift of making all his characters seem very real. Mona Farnsworth and René La Fayette are also very good.

Please don't put much romantic interest in your magazine as it makes the stories too juvenile.

I have read every issue of Unknown so far and it is tops. I have been reading every book and magazine I could get my hands on since I was six, so I think I ought to be a fairly good judge of merit in any type of literature!—Iris Halderman, 110½ E. Garfield Ave., Swanton, Ohio.

We like variety—and a nice, quiet shudder over something we aren't faced with is one variety of escape!

Gentlemen:

I wish to protest against the change that is creeping into your publication. I don't mind the new cover, though I do prefer the old, but I do mind very much the change from humorous fantasy to some

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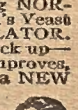

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form of fear psychology. After all, this is an escape medium, this type of magazine, and we readers who spend a month in anticipation and twenty cents in cash feel cheated when our escape is blocked.

I refer, of course, to the novel "Fear" in the July issue, and "But Without Horns" in the June issue. "Fear" is doubtless an excellent thesis in story form, on the mental reactions of a deranged mind, and the picture of dissociation and hysteria is excellent. The author is doubtless well versed in the psychology of mental illness, but frankly, when I want information on that subject I prefer to find it in a textbook! After all, make up your minds. What are you trying to do? Educate your public or amuse us?

The unsettled world conditions tend more than ever to send thoughtful people to seek a fantastic escape medium. After all, reality is quite unpleasant enough without being deluged with superstitious fears and horror-thriller prognostications. Please, please go back to the earlier light fantasy that gave us the delightful "Enchanted Week End" and "Divide and Rule." Funny and fantastic situations that give us our secret desires like "Slaves of Sleep" and "The Ultimate Adventure" are what we want. All of us long to be swashbucklers or seductive sirens, according to our sex, and who hasn't longed to enter fairyland? Give us impossible situations and let us change this sorry world into a better one, as was done in "Lest Darkness Fall."

I, personally, prefer more short stories about elves, pixies, fairies, nymphs, hexers, et cetera, and the unwary mortals who find themselves endowed with magic powers they don't know what to do with. I don't care for serials, nor for the book-length novels, although, of course, a really good novelette like "Enchanted Week End" or "The Ghoul" is worth a dozen mediocre short stories. No doubt my sadistic impulses have taken a milder form, since I do *not* like stories with death on every other page nor hours of bloody agony and torture.

I'm giving Unknown a few more chances, since I am reluctant to let go of it until I have to, but a few more "Sinister Barriers" and I'll have to start looking around for something more cheerful. I guess I just can't take it!—Mrs. Frank Carr, Box 177, Manette, Wis.

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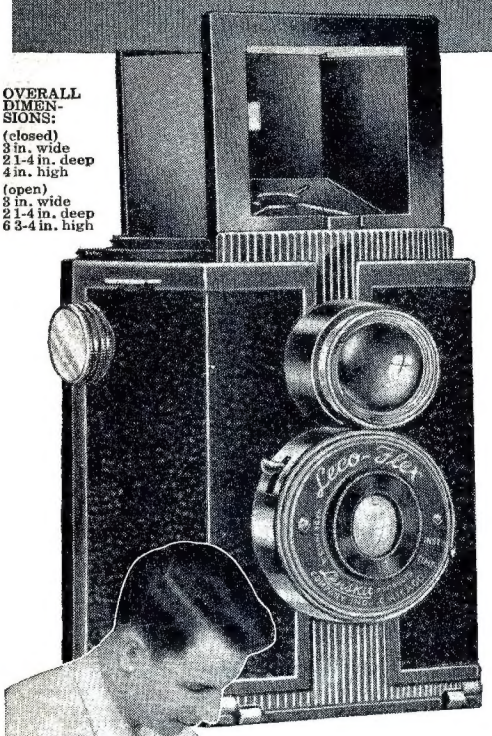

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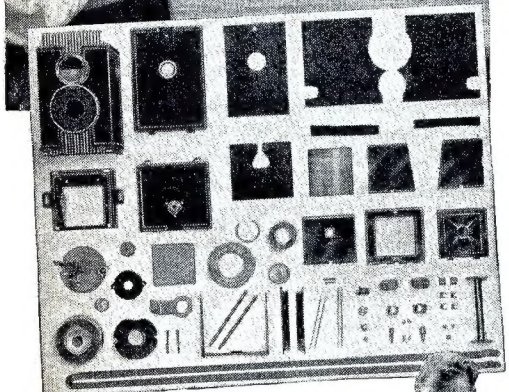

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